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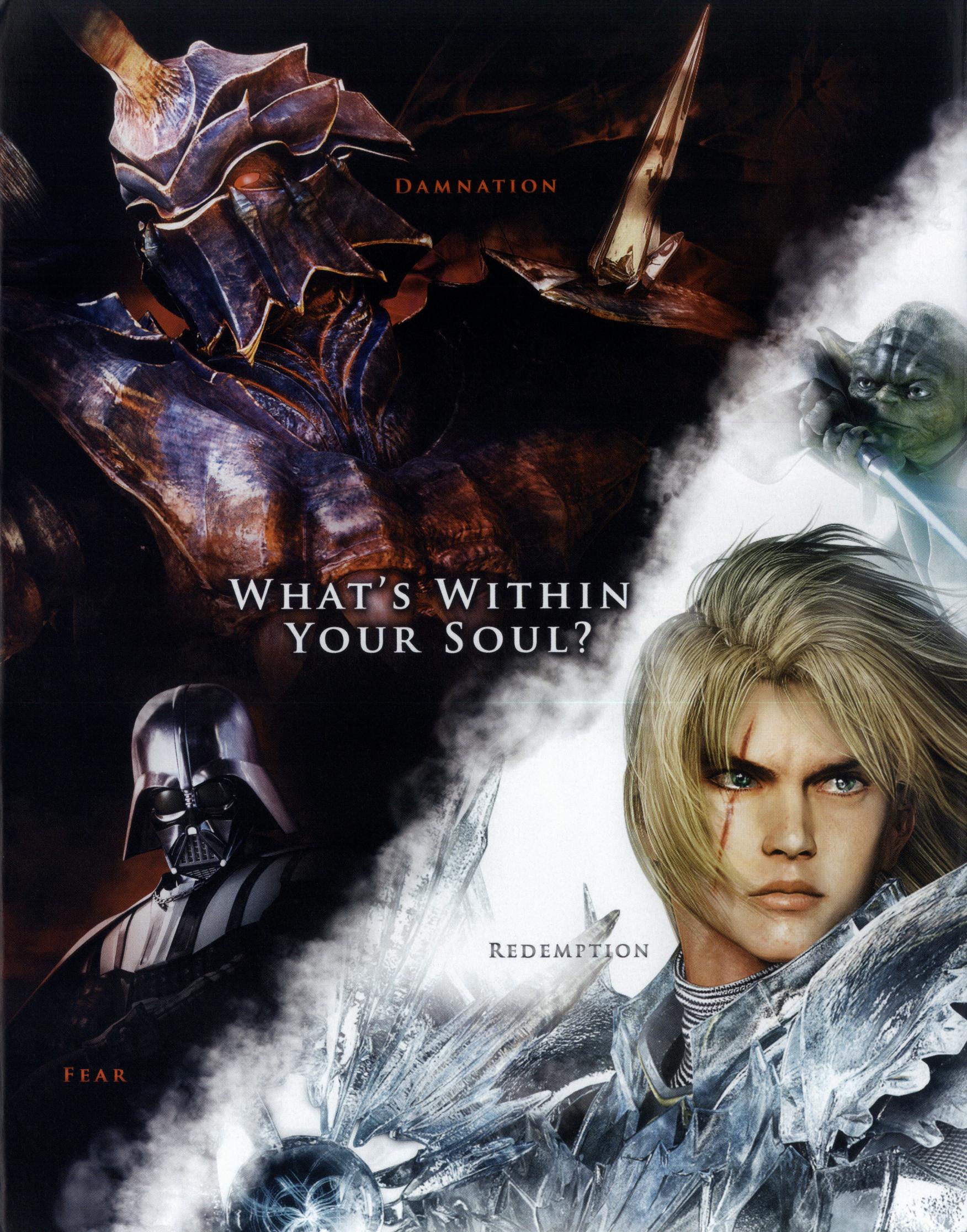
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We take you directly into the black heart of the LA Convention centre. All the goss from E3 awaits dear reader...

5.11

Passport to E3 Conference

The Orpheum – sounds grand so why are we slipping further and further into the side of downtown LA? Maybe EA's plan is to have us filled with JIBS.

12:20pm - SQUARE ENIX Press Conference

One isolated event didn't doom the nation of the rising sun to be forever known as 'eccentric'. Even away from home Squenix press conferences have their own special quirks.

In a small room 60 handpicked journalists from around the world sit unable to block their ears from the droning synthetic music. Intended to be calming it creeps under the skin of the heavily jetlagged members of the press as they start to show visible twitches while waiting for *Final Fantasy XIII* Producer, Yoshinori Kitase and Square Enix's Corporate Executive Shinji Hasimoto. Supposedly starting at 12:30pm, five translators sit patiently ready to ensure that nothing gets lost in translation. My front row seat VIP seat, apparently the word Official pulls some weight (who knew?), provides me with a great view of name tags till 12:52pm when the unassuming men shuffle in.

Between the numerous "to be confirmed" and "still to be decided" comments, we have the latest on the highly anticipated *Final Fantasy XIII*.

CHASE
* Loo
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ONLY FOR INSIDERS!

Often the small exchanges between Kitase and Hasimoto gave more away than their responses. Responses like "to be decided" would start with the men sharing a nod or a grin and often the men gestured to each when neither wanted to take the question.

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Rock Band 2 tracklist revealed, *Final Fantasy XIII* goes multiplatform, Sony's mystery exclusive, and much, much more...

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64 Rated R

We ask the OFLC all of your questions and get into the guts of the rating debate. We want our R18+ now dammit!

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Arguably the greatest fighting franchise on the market, does the fourth iteration live up to the legacy? Find out now!

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It's been a good couple of years. We take a look at the greatest PS3 games released to date...

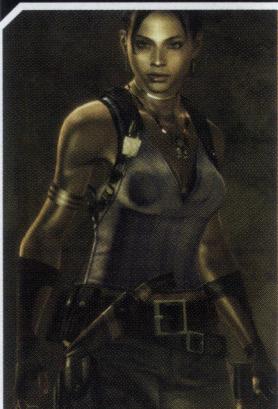
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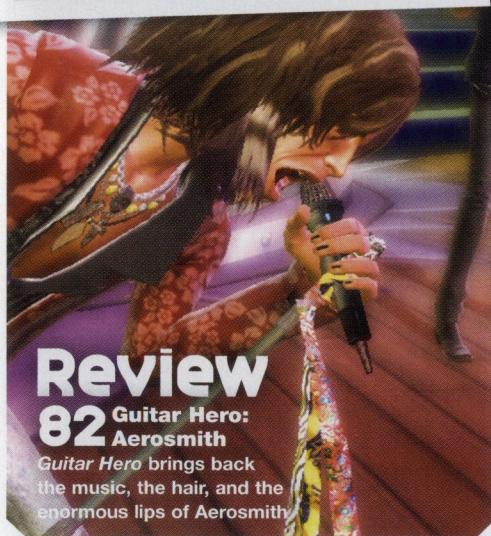
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I must break you...



52 Midnight Club:
Find me in the club...



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Living on the edge!



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82 Guitar Hero: Aerosmith

Guitar Hero brings back the music, the hair, and the enormous lips of Aerosmith



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Win the top 25 PS3 games,
Soulcalibur IV special edition and
much, much more...

WIN!



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EDITOR'S LETTER



“...like you need to have your insides removed so they can be stripped of grease, grim and cholesterol.”

Waking with every muscle in your body screaming at you and a head full of ‘whys’ is pretty much the E3 experience. Each year a handful of Aussie journos return with stories not only of who they saw, interviewed and games discovered but of taxi drivers trying to rip them off, guns that were flashed at them, gutters they sat in and how they avoided a total meltdown or death.

This year we’ve decided to give you the whole package. Sure, we saw games, yes there were announcements but we wanted to show you what we go through to get the stories, what E3 is really like and why I want to die a quick death right now!

What you probably don’t realise is that E3 doesn’t just happen. About two months before the July event it starts to take over your life. People start throwing around the word ‘exclusive’.

Then you arrive! The hotel sucks, people can’t be found, interviews run late and throw off your schedule and everything you do actually eat leaves you feeling like you need to have your insides removed so they can be stripped of grease, grim and cholesterol.

Bring on 2009! But right now I need to go lay down FOR A MONTH!

Ness

Vanessa Morgan
Editor

PS3 online: sibernaut

“We can be Heroes, just for one day” – Bowie

E3 announcements that will never happen?

MARK SERRELS

Activision resurrect zombie Hendrix and Keith Moon to play World Tour resulting in the fans imploding with pleasure. Then to top it all off a headless Kurt Cobain arrives for the encore.

Online: Serrels



PHILLIP JORGE

Here’s one thing that will never happen at E3 AGAIN. They’ll never let me back inside - That’s what! After the amount of booze and free shit I made off with last year E3 security guards have orders to eliminate a brother on sight!

Online: PhiLLip0



ADAM MATHEW

E3 organisers apologise for abolishing booth babes. The doors implode and a ruthless silicon army takes sexy control of the building. Buff gentlemen break through the skylights to offer female journos a manastic experience.

Online: YourmumsAWESOME



DAVE KOZICKI

Gosh there’s just so damn many... *Freedom Fighters 2*: *Get KGBizzayy!*, *Jessica Alba’s Lapdance Simulator*, how about *Seagal vs Van Damme*? I’ll round it out with *Metal Gear Serrels: Highland Sons of the Gingernuts*.

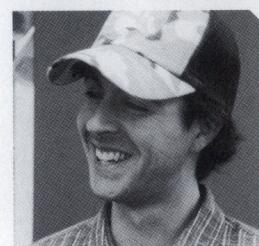
Online: ko-zee-ii



JAMES ELLIS

Kojima climbs out of a barrel and shouts “ha – I bet you didn’t see me in there”. He then proceeds to scream out, while tearing his clothes and applying lipstick, that the events in *MGS4* are real and have already happened.

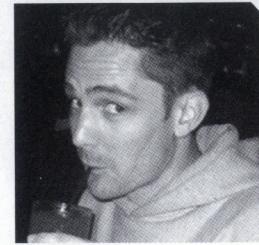
Online: gtfastr49



DAVID WILDGOOSE

Maybe not too unlikely as he was at the Sony Press conference BUT a chastened Phil Harrison appearing on stage to beg Sony’s forgiveness and rescue him from Atari. Seriously, what was he thinking?

Online: Goose



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SHOUT OUTS: QANTAS :: The people of Vancouver :: Hayley Hope :: Heizy and Trish :: Pinkie and the Brain :: Nathan Fillion’s left butt check :: The makers of panadol :: Bartenders :: Jamie and Jenkins :: Ricey and Adrian :: Gush :: High heels ::



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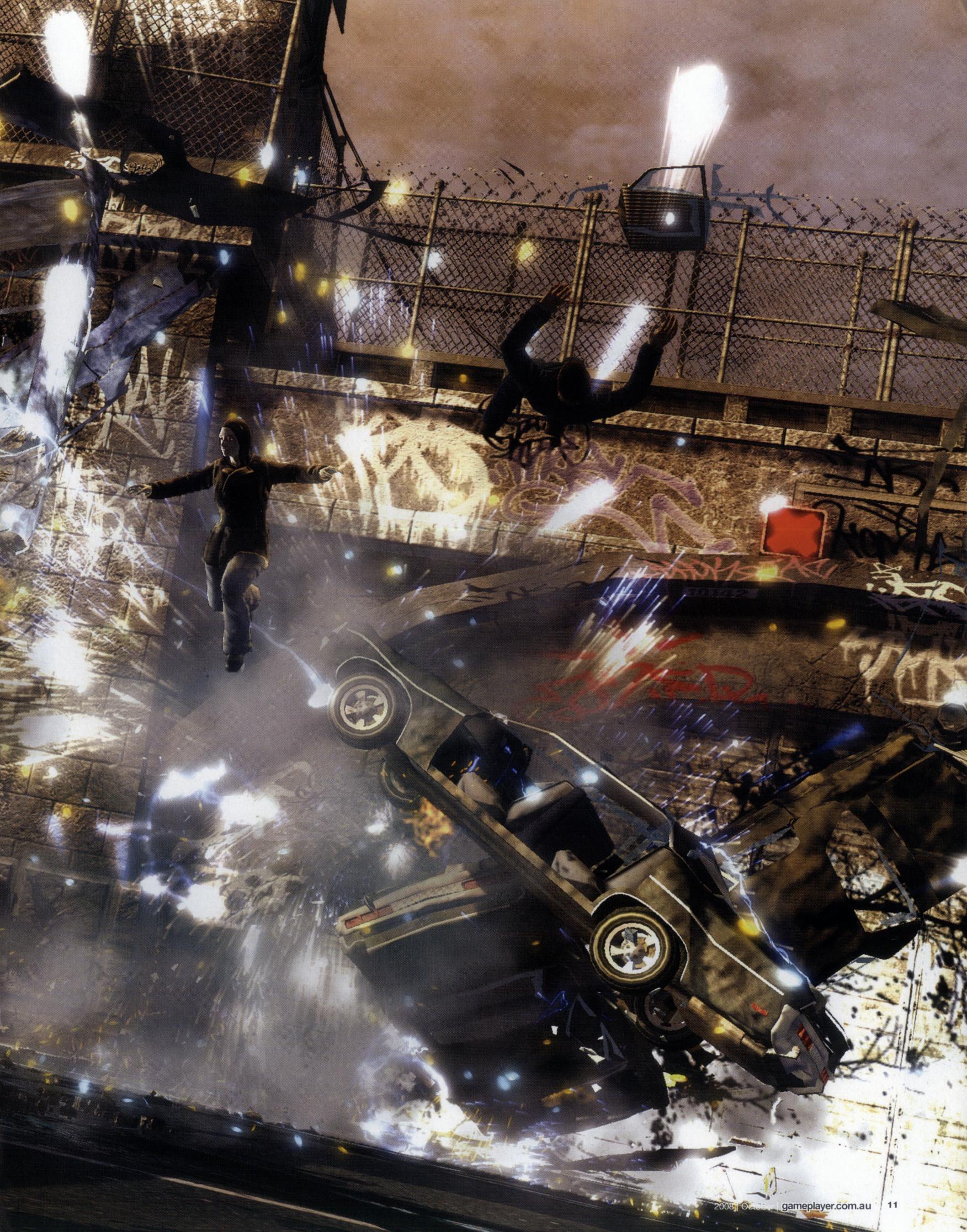
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SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH



InFamous - this Sony exclusive promises a shock to the system as Cole wakes up after a 15 day slumber with the ability to blast his way through Empire City! Oh, the power!



Gaming's latest and greatest...

BUZZ

Sony announces it's the year of the PS3, Rock Band 2 sets the standard, FFXIII goes multi and Danny Way talks up Skate 2...

■ Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Ricky Gervais...



THE YEAR OF THE PS3

Sony takes the honours in a lackluster E3

Whilst the importance of E3 in the video gaming calendar has been decreasing as of late, it still reigns supreme as the number one press event on the calendar, and a real focal point for the gaming community as a whole.

But while E3 has traditionally been a showcase for all new blockbuster titles, this year was strangely subdued in this department, as Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo focused mainly on the games we already knew about.

And on that front Sony dominated with exclusive titles such as *LittleBigPlanet*, *Resistance 2*, *MotorStorm Pacific Rift*, and *Killzone 2* decimating the competition. Even the most biased observers would find it difficult to deny the strength of Sony's upcoming exclusive line-up.

That being said Microsoft stole some ground in other areas, mostly in the realm of third party titles. Most notably *Final Fantasy XIII*, previously a Sony exclusive, was

announced for the 360, but at this stage we don't know if it remains a timed exclusive for the PS3. The upcoming *Rock Band 2* was also announced as a timed exclusive for the Xbox 360, but will still most likely find its way to the PS3 before Christmas.

Thankfully, Sony left the best till last, with their major E3 announcement confirming that *God of War 3* is heavily into development. All that was shown was a short CG teaser trailer, but even that was enough to whet our appetite for what will undoubtedly be one of the biggest games of 2009.

So the future looks bright for the PS3. With a huge number of high profile exclusives in development, and some incredible looking 3rd party titles, such as *Resident Evil 5*, *Guitar Hero World Tour*, and *I am Alive* from Ubisoft, it's safe to say that 2008, leading into 2009, is truly the year of the PS3.

Check out our full report on E3 beginning on page 29.



AT THE MOVIES



Another big Sony announcement at E3 was the introduction of movie downloads to the PlayStation network – a feature that went live the very day it was announced at E3. PS3 owners can now rent HD movies or shows via the PSN, and watch them either through the PS3 or transfer them across to the PSP. In addition, now that the PSN is now accessible through your home computer, it's possible to download them on your PC then transfer the file to your PSP that way. The PSN's movie service looks set to feature a huge range of films from Fox, MGM, Disney, Paramount and, of course, Sony pictures.

LET THERE BE ROCK

Rock Band 2 tracklist finally unveiled...

We've said on many occasions that the inevitable *Rock Band 2* vs. *Guitar Hero World Tour* face off will be won and lost on tracklistings, and after seeing *Rock Band 2*'s tracklist in full, we believe that Harmonix have landed a hefty blow to *Guitar Hero*'s chances...

1. AC/DC "Let There Be Rock"
2. AFI "Girl's Gone Grey"
3. Alanis Morissette "You Oughta Know"
4. Alice in Chains "Man in the Box"
5. Allman Brothers "Ramblin' Man"
6. Avenged Sevenfold "Almost Easy"
7. Bad Company "Shooting Star"
8. Beastie Boys "So Whatcha Want"
9. Beck "E-Pro"
10. Bikini Kill "Rebel Girl"
11. Billy Idol "White Wedding Pt. I"
12. Blondie "One Way or Another"
13. Bob Dylan "Tangled Up in Blue"
14. Bon Jovi "Livin' on a Prayer"
15. Cheap Trick "Hello There"
16. Devo "Uncontrollable Urge"
17. Dinosaur Jr. "Feel the Pain"
18. Disturbed "Down with the Sickness"
19. Dream Theater "Panic Attack"
20. Duran Duran "Hungry Like the Wolf"
21. Elvis Costello "Pump It Up"
22. Fleetwood Mac "Go Your Own Way"
23. Foo Fighters "Everlong"
24. Guns N' Roses "Shackler's Revenge"
25. Interpol "PDA"
26. Jane's Addiction "Mountain Song"
27. Jethro Tull "Aqualung"
28. Jimmy Eat World "The Middle"
29. Joan Jett "Bad Reputation"
30. Journey "Anyway You Want It"
31. Judas Priest "Painkiller"
32. Kansas "Carry On Wayward Son"
33. L7 "Pretend We're Dead"
34. Lacuna Coil "Our Truth"
35. Linkin Park "One Step Closer"
36. Lit "My Own Worst Enemy"
37. Lush "De-Luxe"
38. Mastodon "Colony of Birchmen"
39. Megadeth "Peace Sells"
40. Metallica "Battery"
41. Mighty Mighty Bosstones "Where'd You Go?"
42. Modest Mouse "Float On"
43. Motorhead "Ace of Spades"
44. Nirvana "Drain You"
45. Norman Greenbaum "Spirit in the Sky"
46. Panic at the Disco "Nine in the Afternoon"
47. Paramore "That's What You Get"
48. Pearl Jam "Alive"
49. Presidents of the USA "Lump"
50. Rage Against the Machine "Testify"
51. Ratt "Round & Round"
52. Red Hot Chili Peppers "Give it Away"
53. Rise Against "Give it All"
54. Rush "The Trees"
55. Silversun Pickups "Lazy Eye"
56. Smashing Pumpkins "Today"
57. Social Distortion "I Was Wrong"
58. Sonic Youth "Teenage Riot"
59. Soundgarden "Spoonman"
60. Squeeze "Cool for Cats"
61. Steely Dan "Bodhisattva"
62. Steve Miller Band "Rockin' Me"
63. Survivor "Eye of the Tiger"
64. System of a Down "Chop Suey"
65. Talking Heads "Psycho Killer"
66. Tenacious D "Master Exploder"
67. Testament "Souls of Black"
68. The Donnas "New Kid in School"
69. The Go-Go's "We Got the Beat"
70. The Grateful Dead "Alabama Getaway"
71. The Guess Who "American Woman"
72. The Muffs "Kids in America"

73. The Offspring "Come Out & Play (Keep 'em Separated)"
74. The Replacements "Alex Chilton"
75. The Who "Pinball Wizard"

Bonus Artists and tracks

76. Abnormality "Visions"
77. Anarchy Club "Get Clean"
78. Bang Camaro "Night Lies"
79. Breaking Wheel "Shoulder to the Plow"
80. The Libyans "Neighborhood"
81. The Main Drag "A Jagged Gorgeous Winter"
82. Speck "Conventional Lover"
83. The Sterns "Supreme Girl"
84. That Handsome Devil "Rob the Prez-O-Dent"



FINAL FANTASY XIII GOES MULTIPLATFORM

But what does that mean for PS3 owners...

... well, not a lot really, to be honest. The game is still coming to the PS3 after all, and since development on the 360 version hasn't begun (and according to an interview we conducted with Square Enix heads the 360 development won't even start until after the PS3 version is finished) it's pretty safe to say that the PS3 *Final Fantasy XIII* will be the definitive version of the game, and 360 owners will have to be content with a simple port. In addition, it's important to confirm that *Final Fantasy XIII* will remain exclusive to Sony in the Japan territory.

However, plenty of questions are yet to be resolved. No one, as of now, knows whether *Final Fantasy XIII Versus* will remain exclusive to the PS3 – but since development on that spin off title reportedly ceased a couple of months ago, it's a strong possibility that the *Versus* team is currently helping on the PS3 version of *FFXIII*. Since development hasn't begun on the 360, it's also possible that the game

will turn out to be a timed exclusive for the PS3, with the 360 version coming out later, *ala* *Bioshock* for the PS3.

But it's all speculation – *FFXIII* may come out first on the PS3, or it may turn out to be a simultaneous release on both consoles. *FFXIII Versus* development may resume, or be suspended indefinitely. One thing is for certain, however, *Final Fantasy XIII* is still going to be released on the PS3, and we can pretty much guarantee it will be the definitive version.

More news as we get it.



ON THE FORUMS...

Final Fantasy goes multiplatform...

Mmm... let me taste your tears.
Joah

Yawn... who cares, I don't think we will be seeing too many real exclusives on any system for long.
Adin75

I'll kill everybody!
SuperSteve16

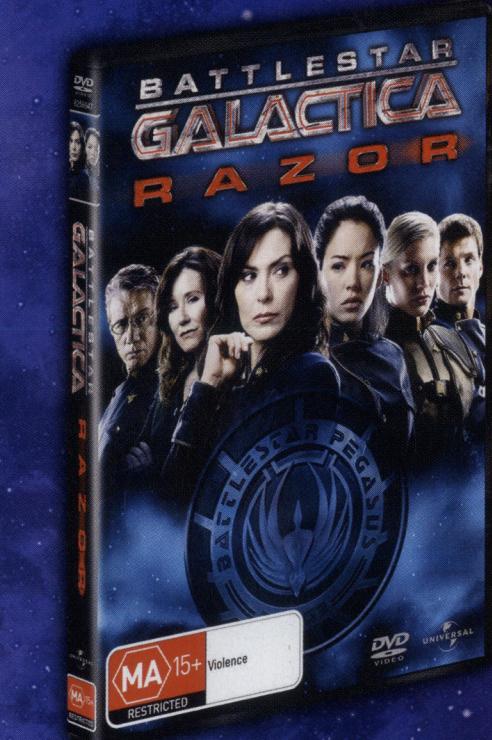
I'll still get this on PS3, seeing as I won't have to change the game disc 10 times.
DaZa

From here in, it's going to be hard to separate the truth from the rumours and speculation... I'm just glad that, at some point in the future, I'll get to play *FFXIII*.
Fluke

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BUZZ

INFO NUDGE

Prodding you in the ribs with all the latest newsbites...

SHOCKING

While plenty of developers have disappointed us thus far with their support for Sony's new Trophy system, thankfully we have been informed that the upcoming *Bioshock* (complete with all new content) will feature trophies, roughly in line with the achievements on the 360 version.



ANIME-NATION

Now that Sony have unleashed their plans for movie rentals, those lucky Japanese have also been promised that an Anime specific section will be allocated. With Anime becoming more and more mainstream in both the US and abroad, we're hoping that Sony will see fit to also upload Anime to the PSN for us non-Japanese.



BRING THE PAIN

Finally, Chuck Norris has gotten his own videogame, and while it's a mobile phone game, and not available on any Sony platforms, we're too afraid of that hulking specimen of man-god to not mention it in the mag. Apparently the game will allow you to put the hurt on dictators such as Kim Jong II and Fidel Castro...



MGO CATASTROPHE

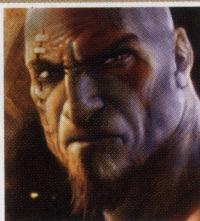
Sadly the whole *Metal Gear Online* hassle continues. After the difficulty of simply trying to log on, the addition of the new "Gene expansion pack" has put the Konami's servers into overdrive. Having underestimated demand, many have been overcharged for the package. While all have now been refunded Konami have yet to fix the problem, and sadly issues remain prevalent with the MGO service.



WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

God of War III

In the end, there will only be chaos...



Resident Evil 5

Co-op play, awesome environments, wow...



LittleBigPlanet

This game will amaze you – guaranteed...



CG Trailers

Hmm – show us some gameplay next time...



WWE

Another franchise in need of a reboot...



E3

Poor show old chap. Evolve or die...



FFXIII on 360?

Why? Why, why why, why, why, why, WHY?



HOT!

NOT!

BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE... Apparently...

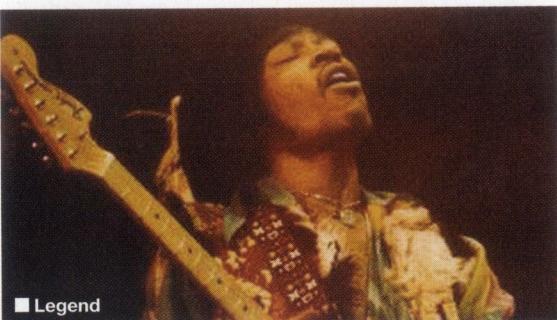
In an attempt to quell speculation that Sony would be charging customers to download the mass amounts of user generated content from *LittleBigPlanet*, Sony Europe released a statement claiming that the content in question would actually be free. Huzzah.

Speaking to Eurogamer, Sony Europe stated that "Media Molecule can guarantee that all consumer-generated content will be free at launch. We know how important this is to the *LBP* community and what we want most is for people to enjoy playing, creating and sharing their content."

Considering that Sony are looking for *LittleBigPlanet* to push user created content into overdrive, and really push the PlayStation Network forward, we're glad that Sony made this decision..



■ We wants it...



■ Legend

EXCUSE ME WHILE I KISS THIS GUY

Hendrix makes it to *Guitar Hero IV*

Post E3 we found ourselves drawn to *Rock Band 2* a little more, purely due to the fact that the big announcement from Activision was new REM tracks, while Harmonix announced AC/DC – no contest.

But Activision threw a spanner in the works when they announced that the greatest dead guitarist of all time, Jimi Hendrix, would be making an appearance in *Guitar Hero World Tour*, as would one of his most popular songs, 'Purple Haze'.

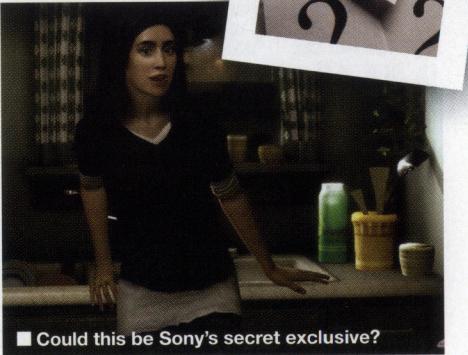
So once again we are in a bit of a predicament with regards to which music game to buy towards the end of this year... we await further info on *Guitar Hero World Tour* with baited breath.

SONY'S MYSTERY GAME... Ooh... mysterious

Eagle eyed readers may remember we reported that BBC tech blogger Darren Waters had been lucky enough to lay eyes on an unannounced PS3 exclusive that would change "what video games were capable of in terms of story-telling and immersion". Our first reaction to this was salvation, our second was to wonder what the hell this game was!

Now that E3 has come and gone, and Sony has a couple of new exclusives on the table we started to wonder if the unannounced game was either of these three exclusives? Apparently the answer to that question is no...

Which makes us wonder, just where exactly is this new game, and why the hell are Sony keeping it so close to their chest. Speculation abounds that Darren Waters is mistaken, and the exclusive in question is *Heavy Rain* but most believe that the game is yet to be shown to anyone outside the lucky BBC blogger.



■ Could this be Sony's secret exclusive?

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TOP 10 GAMES CHART



1



GTA IV

2



Buzz Quiz TV

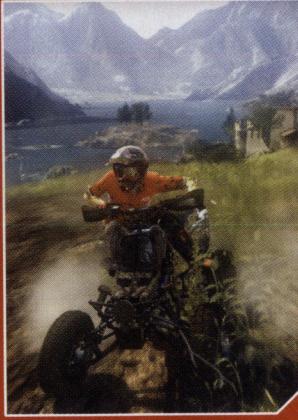
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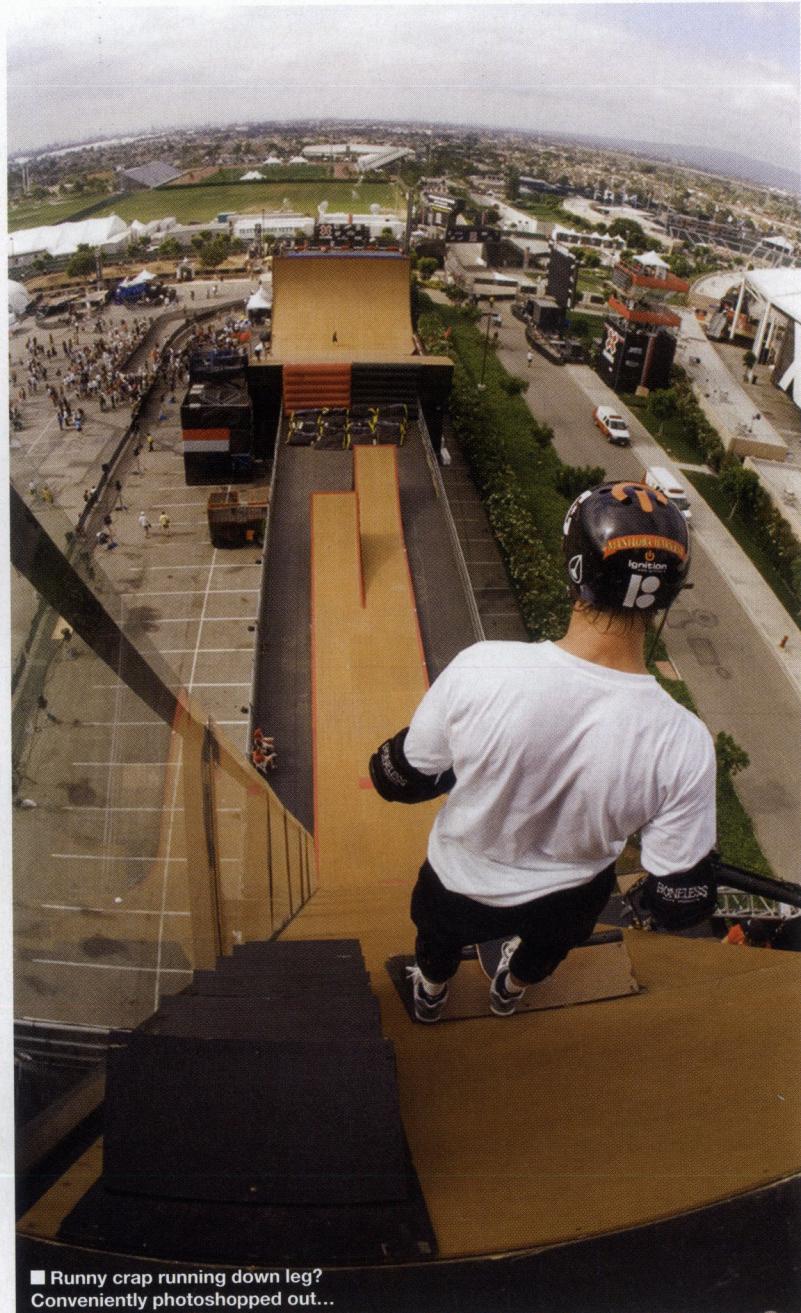
MGS4

Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	Beijing Olympics 2008	Sports	SEGA
5	Race Driver: GRID	Racing	Atari
6	Battlefield: Bad Company	Shooter	EA
7	Guitar Hero 3	Party	Activision
8	Top Spin 3	Sports	2K
9	Dragon Ball Z Burst Limit	Fighter	Atari
10	Assassin's Creed	Action	Ubisoft

COMING SOON



Format	Title	Category	Distributor
AUGUST			
PS3	Soulcalibur IV	Fighting	Ubisoft
PS3	Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	Party	Activision
PS3	Madden NFL 09	Sports	EA
PS3	Hellboy: The Science of Evil	Action	Atari
PS3	Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway	Shooter	Ubisoft
PS3	Ferrari Challenge	Racing	Red Ant
PS3	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2009	Sports	EA
SEPTEMBER			
PS3	Destroy All Humans: Path of the Furon	Action	THQ
PS3	SOCOM: Confrontation	Shooter	Sony
PS3	TNA iMPACT	Fighting	Red Ant
PS3	Midnight Club: Los Angeles	Driving	Rockstar
PS3	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Action	Activision
PS3	Rise of the Argonauts	RPG	Atari
OCTOBER			
PS3	Alone in the Dark	Action	Atari
PS3	Motorstorm Pacific Rift	Driving	Sony
PS3	LittleBigPlanet	Platformer	Sony
PS3	Saints Row 2	Action	THQ
PS3	Pure	Driving	Funtastic



■ Runny crap running down leg?
Conveniently photoshopped out...

THE WAY FORWARD

Danny Way reveals all about SKATE 2

SKATE was one of our games of 2007 hands down – to the extent that we've placed it at a lofty five in our top 25 PS3 games to date – so when we were asked to interview skating superstar Danny Way about his involvement in the sequel, we got excited. A little too excited. All right, we're not going to beat around the bush here, we got a boner – there we said it.

Turns out Danny Way is almost as excited: "I had high expectations for the original game, but was just blown away by what EA did with the game. The quality was incredible. I'm looking forward to being blown away again by *SKATE 2*".

Danny Way also had a few choice words for competing franchise *Tony Hawk's*, claiming that Activision's game "was barely a skating game, the skateboard was more of a vehicle to go places. Really the game has no relevance to the skating world... ultimately I'm glad that our game is better."

And when questioned on what was new in *SKATE 2*, Way was understandably reluctant to give too much away, but revealed that this time around you won't be glued to your skateboard – going on foot to access new skate-able areas is going to be part of the experience.

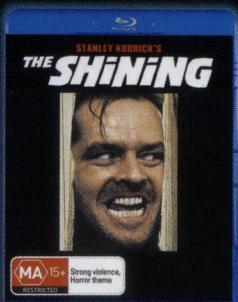
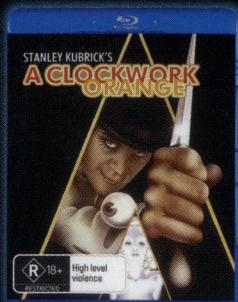
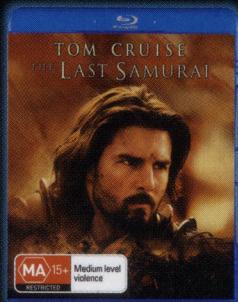
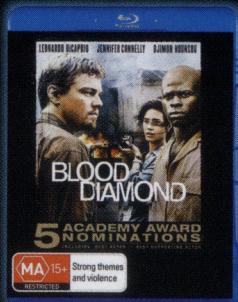
SKATE is also committed to bringing it back to the old school tricks. Danny Way really wants gamers to appreciate the heritage of skating via the game, and as a result tricks such as finger flicks, and one footed airs are being added. Handplants, a notable omission from *SKATE*, will also be part of *SKATE 2*. The amount of tricks in the game have apparently doubled from the original.

Unsurprisingly many major skating names have flocked towards the *SKATE*, and Way claimed that many "new skaters, and all the magazines" were keen to hitch their trailer to the franchise, OPS is just as keen as anyone to hop onto the bandwagon. Can't wait.

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What's next for our favourite games?

WHERE TO NOW?

We still love LEGO, and the recent games have further strengthened our bond with the expensive plastic product. So far, *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and *Batman* have all been cast into virtual LEGO adventures – so what might be next? Here are a few suggestions that we think might actually have a chance of getting made...



THE GAME?	EXPLAIN YOURSELF...	THE STORY	HOW WILL IT PLAY?	PROBABILITY
 LEGO MATRIX: THE COMPLETE TRILOGY	The LEGO games seem obsessed with trilogies, so what better choice than one of the coolest action flick trilogies ever put to film? Well, the first one was cool, at least.	You play an actor of questionable talent who must insinuate himself into a really cool action movie that uses bullet time camera effects brilliantly whilst acting all emoting at being labeled as 'the One'. Wait, that's Keanu's job application...	The hub world will obviously be the Nebuchadnezzar, and you'll plug into the Matrix to take on missions. The Oracle will become a playable character once you've worked out how to set her and Morpheus up on a blind date.	The LEGO games seem to be coming thick and fast, so it's definitely a possibility. We can imagine the massive Agent Smith fight already – plastic heads, limbs and other detachable body parts flying everywhere!
 LEGO LORD OF THE RINGS: THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE OF THE BOOKS	Large scale battles, mysterious magical beings, walking trees, girly-men elves – this one pretty much sells itself as an all out LEGO adventure!	We all know the story: good vs. evil blah, blah. We do hope that the developers drop the male bonding scenes between the hobbits – they're a little worrying.	The game would focus on all the fun bits where people fight – a full scale, epic, in-game battle with LEGO men would rock! In a surprise twist, the Balrog will become part of the fellowship after Gimli decides he'd like to try his luck casting for the Narnia films.	Don't go rushing out to place a pre-order. But it would be quite awesome to play as LEGOolas.
 LEGO LEGO	We're kind of forgetting, among all the franchised games, that an actual LEGO game would be great fun too. And probably cheaper than buying actual LEGO.	The story starts with a box of LEGO in a store. Some snot-nosed kid buys it and adds it to his huge collection. When night falls, the LEGO pieces come to life, murder said boy and his entire family and then move on to world domination...	The game starts with a first person perspective as your LEGO avatar gets put together. From there it's a rousing adventure of destruction and carnage as the pesky humans try to defy your plastic lasers and fragile vehicles.	Yeah, probably not going to happen, but if you're a millionaire developer looking for your next project let us know if you'd like some more plot details.
 LEGO X-MEN	This one's a no brainer; heaps of awesome characters who face each other in battle. Not to mention it's a great opportunity to make the LEGO clothing so tight on the female characters that every male who plays it will feel a stirring in his pants.	Professor X is kidnapped by Magneto to play a game of chess. The X-Men, oblivious to this because they're too busy sleeping with each other, eventually realise he's missing when they discover the professor's anti-dandruff shampoo hasn't been used for three days.	Now we're talking! Hot-swapping between all the different heroes and using their powers would be great fun. We'd be particularly excited to play as Wolverine because, well, are there any other X-Men characters that are actually useful?	LEGO Batman is a reality, so it's just a hop, skip and jump to approach Marvel with a 'pretty please'?
 LEGO BACK TO THE FUTURE	LEGO games love their vehicle sections, and there's no cooler vehicle than a time traveling Delorian – perfect fodder to be LEGO-fied.	The game will follow the events of the movies closely, except the second one where they get all lovey dovey in the wild west – those bits will be skipped over and you'll go straight to the train sequence. Oh, and ZZ Top will reprise their cameo!	Once you get that Delorian up to 88 mph, it's off to each movie to bash the crap out of Biff and co. There will also be a hoverboard level and a mini-game involving kissing your own mother in the past.	A cult movie trilogy just begging for the LEGO treatment. Michael J. Fox never ages so he can probably come back and record some more dialogue. We're quietly hopeful.

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PLAYSTATION 3

PlayStation 2

NINTENDO DS

Wii

PC
DVD
ROM

PG

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Recommended

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COMPS

FULLY LOADED!

We're not just ranking them; we're giving them away! All of them! The top 25 PS3* games are up for grabs to one ridiculously lucky Official PlayStation reader.

- Grand Theft Auto IV
- Metal Gear Solid 4
- Call of Duty 4
- Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- SKATE
- Pixel Junk Monsters
- Assassin's Creed
- Oblivion
- MotorStorm
- Burnout Paradise
- Resistance
- Warhawk
- Race Driver: GRID
- Orange Box
- Devil May Cry 4
- Riff: Everyday Shooter
- Guitar Hero 3
- Ninja Gaiden Sigma
- Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction
- SuperStardust HD
- Battlefield: Bad Company
- Heavenly Sword
- Fight Night Round 3
- Singstar



WIN!

HOW TO ENTER

Please see www.gameplayer.com.au for full terms and conditions. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competition starts 13/08/08 and closes 09/09/08. Winners will be notified by mail and their names on www.gameplayer.com.au. Enter online at www.gameplayer.com.au/comps or send your entry to OPS PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction 1355.

To win, tell us in 25 words or less, which game will top 2009's best games for PS3 and why?

Enter online at www.gameplayer.com.au/comps
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Soulcalibur IV

Soulcalibur IV THE ULTIMATE TOURNAMENT from 1st July 2008

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Enter online at www.gameplayer.com.au/comps
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COMPS

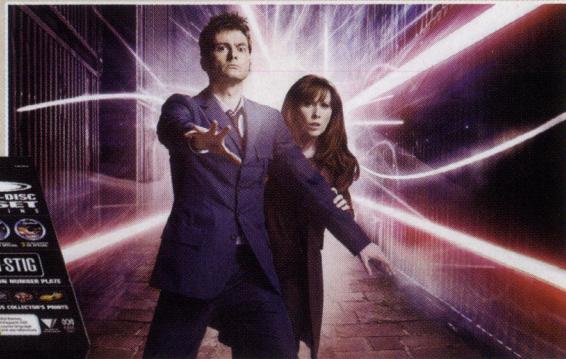


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LETTERS



WHO'S AWESOME?

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LETTER OF THE CENTURY

WE'RE AWESOME

In my house there are two consoles – a PS3 and a (recently fixed due to the red rings of death) 360. So occasionally the relevant magazines are purchased (including yours) to read up on an upcoming games.

Now onto my point – some 360 magazines take literally every opportunity, whenever Sony are mentioned, to immediately add words like 'losers', or 'wankers', every time without fail – yet the harshest thing I've ever heard you guys say is calling the 360 "Bill's shiny box" – which isn't really harsh at all.

Now, I've just (emphasis on the *just*) turned 37 years old and have owned/played just about every console since the Atari 2600 (I even had the original black and white 'tennis' game with the paddles for God's sake) so I guess you could say I'm a gamer, and not just some do-gooder having a moan, but I feel that 'grown ups' have a responsibility not to call someone a

'loser' or a 'fanboy' simply due to their console of choice!

Anyway, the moral of the story is: everyone should bloody well grow up.

Well done you guys, for your professional attitude towards healthy competition, it's very refreshing. Hopefully some other publications will follow suit.

Jason Topping, W.A.

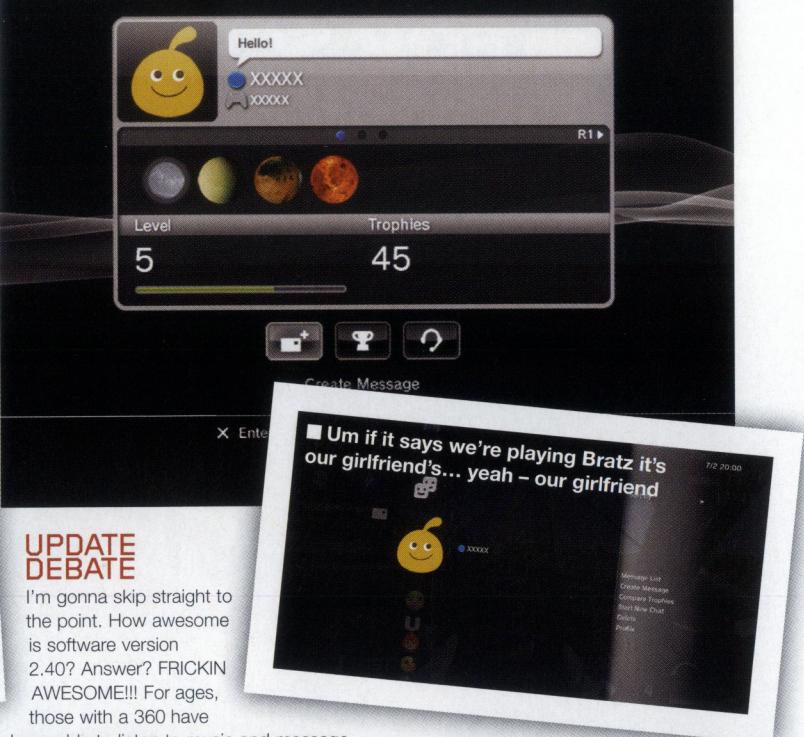
Thanks for the letter Jason, and thanks for the compliment. Basically, just like you, everyone that works on the mag is a long time gamer like yourself, and we've played and owned multiple consoles from various different companies. Therefore we feel it's offensive, and a bit old fashioned and immature, to get involved in pointless mud slinging towards the 'competition'. It's disrespectful and affects the credibility of our magazine – how can readers trust our opinions if we come across as brain dead idiots?



WINNER!

Letter of the month wins a copy of *Soulcalibur IV*! Enjoy jiggly jug physics and duke it out with Vader!

■ Be lazy, choose the very first avatar on the PSN, that's what we did...



UPDATE DEBATE

I'm gonna skip straight to the point. How awesome is software version 2.40? Answer? FRICKIN AWESOME!!! For ages, those with a 360 have been able to listen to music and message friends while they're playing their games, while we humble PlayStations have been left in the rain. But Sony has seen the light! And with the new trophy system, which is BETTER than the 360's achievements system, PlayStation is that one step closer to world domination... I mean, winning this console war.

Alexander Garner, via email

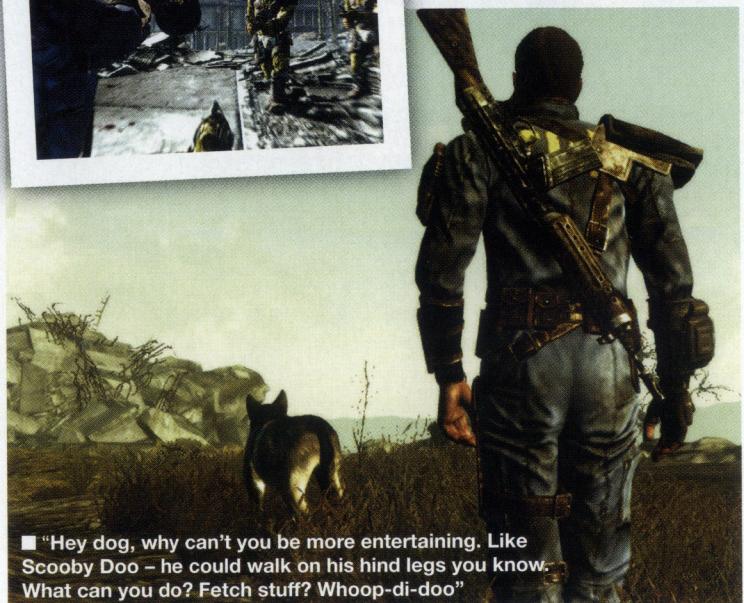
Yep, we were also pretty impressed with the 2.40 update (less impressed with 2.41 update, get it right first time...). At the moment it seems like the PSN is making huge leaps forward – by the time home makes its debut, Sony should have the best online set up around.

OFLC FALLOUT

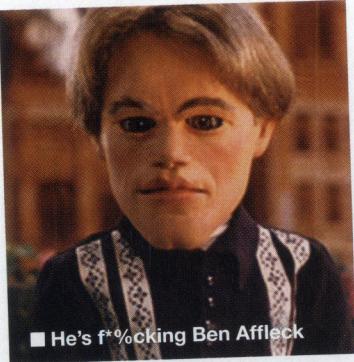
Why do all of the good games get banned in Australia? Yesterday I heard that *Fallout 3* was banned, WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH OUR RATING SYSTEM? I know you have received a few letters regarding this issue, but I think that it needs more coverage! I want to know why games are getting banned from Australia when there is much more dangerous things that children are exposed to. Why doesn't the government work more on those bigger issues and just let us relax and play some good games!

Chilipy, via email

Everytime the OFLC bans a perfectly safe, non-threatening game, God kills a kitten, chokeslams a fluffy little bunny, and stomps on a newborn puppy with his size 3000 Doc Martens. Honestly, this whole OFLC debacle is now beyond a joke, and something has to be done.



■ "Hey dog, why can't you be more entertaining. Like Scooby Doo – he could walk on his hind legs you know. What can you do? Fetch stuff? Whoop-di-doo!"



■ He's f*cking Ben Affleck

MATT DAMON!

Matt Damon plus *The Bourne Conspiracy* – you'd think it would make a great action game, and even though I enjoyed the game, it would have made much more sense to bring Matt Damon into the role of Jason Bourne. His reason for not taking part in the game? Apparently he thought the game was too violent! I don't know about you guys but I think he should take a look at his movies, and see how many people he shot, sucker punched in the head, ran into a wall and hit over the head with a shovel. The movie is just as violent as the game, if not more so. I know that it was based on the novels and Jason Bourne didn't actually look anything like Matt Damon, but come on. Let's put it this way, I'd rather have Jason Bourne in my Bourne game simply because three quarters of the world has seen and heard Matt Damon in the movies as Bourne.

Seamus Townsend, via email

Well Seamus, we also would have liked to see Jason Bourne's likeness attached to The Bourne Conspiracy, but we don't feel that the game suffered due to his absence. To be fair to Matt Damon, his justification was that Bourne only used violence when absolutely necessary, whilst the video game had players seeking out violent encounters.

THE INTERWEBS

Hey guys I love your mag it's like the best in the world and *Resistance* is the best. I completely beat it – but I'm 15, at home and my mum refuses to get the Internet!!

And to get online I have to walk to the library and pay \$2 for 25min. While I'm doing this, you are saying how good it is having 60 people online and I read this and wonder how great this 'internet' thing really is. I cannot wait for *Resistance 2* it must be the omega of all games!

Camo Tomus, via email



■ "High five! Whoops... I've killed another one"

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

TURNED ON

Can the PlayStation 3 be left on eternally like a home computer or is it better to turn it off when not in use.

Chooc, via email

We recommend turning it off – just to save overheating and save you on your electricity bill!

HOME SWEET HOME

Which mobile phones will be compatible with *home*?

Scott Stannard, via email

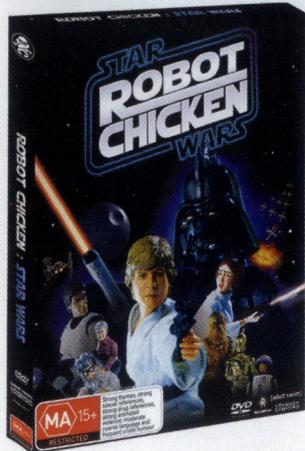
Erm... um... to be quite honest we don't really know!

IT'S TRICKY!

Will SSX ever make it's way to the mighty PS3? Hope to hear from you soon keep up the good work. Cheers.

Adrian

Sadly we haven't heard anything – but you could do a lot worse than to keep a beady eye on Pure, which oddly enough plays a lot like SSX...



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PG

Mild violence



This is living

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PASSPORT TO E3.

Getting up at 6am, having your flight delayed indefinitely, finding out there's an engineer strike, finally boarding and realising you're on a flight with 100 youth group kids high on sugar! E3, here we go.



P A S S P O R T



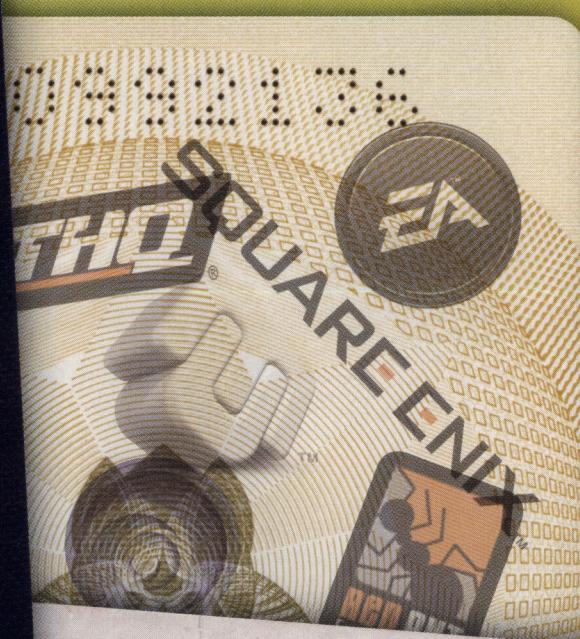
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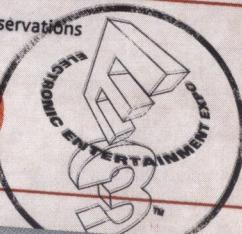
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To | Destination

LOS ANGELES - E3

Remarks | Observations



FEATURE

E3 Coverage special

DAY ONE

The easy way to play!



Kitase reviews the list of things he can discuss... It didn't take long!

ONLY FOR INSIDERS!

Often the small exchanges between Kitase and Hasimoto gave more away than their responses. Responses like "to be decided" would start with the men sharing a nod or a grin and often the men gestured to each when neither wanted to take the question.



Name: Unknown, World: Unknown, Press conference: To be decided

12:20pm - SQUARE ENIX Press Conference

One isolated event didn't doom the nation of the rising sun to be forever known as 'eccentric'. Even away from home Squenix press conferences have their own special quirks.

In a small room 60 handpicked journalists from around the world sit unable to block their ears from the droning synthetic music. Intended to be calming it creeps under the skin of the heavily jetlagged members of the press as they start to show visible twitches while waiting for *Final Fantasy XIII* Producer, Yoshinori Kitase and Square Enix's Corporate Executive Shinji Hashimoto. Supposedly starting at 12:30pm, five translators sit patiently ready to ensure that nothing gets lost in translation. My front row seat VIP seat, apparently the word Official pulls some weight (who knew?), provides me with a great view of name tags till 12:52pm when the unassuming men shuffle in.

Between the numerous "to be confirmed" and "still to be decided" comments, we have the latest on the highly anticipated *Final Fantasy XIII*.

CHASING THE FANTASY

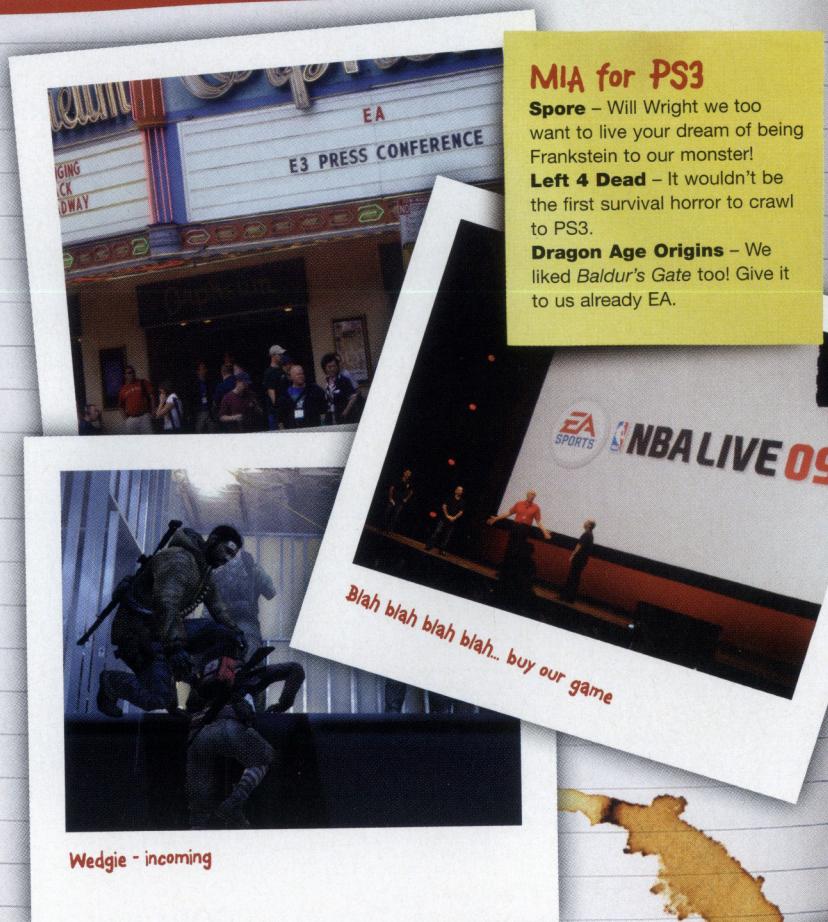
- * Looking to "make it its own game. It will have a new unique game design". Kitase says that "Overall, the atmosphere is different. The tempo and the speed are different. The entire direction is different. It's flashier."
- * *FFXIII* is being developed using the Crystal Tools engine, which will also be used for Versus, and the MMORPG.
- * Kitase says there are no plans to use the SIXAXIS motion control at this time.
- * The battle system will be known as ATB.
- * Discussing their favourite game of the series, Hashimoto says he was so "deeply involved" with *FFVII* that he can't go past it. Kitase agrees and adds that about 10 years he is "still working" on the title. Hopefully a sign of things to come, *FFVII* remake?

3:01 - EA Press Conference

The Orpheum – sounds grand so why are we slipping further and further into the seedy side of downtown LA? Maybe EA's plan is to have us all mugged, then lighten our souls with press kits filled with USBs, *Spore* Creature Creators and signature notepads. As we are once again reminded that all mobile phones should now be turned off, the show starts ON TIME as EA's COO John Riccitetto takes the stage.

They're not going to flash us numbers, they're not going to talk market share... WAIT, no powerpoint presentations. EA you've changed! Instead one by one the studios step up to show their wares.

- * First to take the stage from EA's Redwood Shores studio is Glen Schofield guiding us through the 'strategic dismemberment' of *Dead Space*. Gory and graphic, the screen clear of HUD, it was the sound that drew in the crowd. And the intense battles, intensified by not being able to simply blow off the monsters head (nope, headless the beasts just kept coming). Watching the wall grab you and hearing "Twinkle, Twinkle light star" sung in a little girl's voice – terrifying.
- * Then *Mirror's Edge* takes a leap on to the stage. Being played on a PS3, the game promises speed, challenging puzzles and a true sense of movement. No matter where she is – roof top, sewer or indoors the red indicators mark Faith's path. It's fast and very exciting!
- * Peter Moore, our old nemesis, takes the stage. *NBA Live 09*. American basketball could be a bit of a yawn but Moore the eternal showman makes 'Dynamic DNA' – real data updated daily into the game come to life and just think about the possibilities for *FIFA*, *NHL*, *Madden* et al...
- * Rupture. It's a website that allows users to track friends and their achievements. The idea is to build a community site to share data, create achievements challenging your friends.
- * RAGE! RAGE! RAAGE! Yes, id Software have signed on with EA. *Rage*, their dry, dirty first person game will incorporate action, driving and exploration. It's *Mad Max* meets *Resident Evil*.



8pm: - THQ drinks/dinner the rooftop of the Standard. CENSORED!

12 - 3am: - the writing begins.



DAY TWO

11:47AM - The SONY Conference

A TEN YEAR VISION

2008 has truly been the year where the PS3 has shifted gears and started pushing things forward. *GT: Prologue*, *GTA IV*, and *MGS4* have come and gone, and their unprecedented success was celebrated during Sony's E3 opening press conference, but beyond the hearty backslapping was a commitment to the future - Sony's plans for the PS3 were always based on a healthy ten year future for the console, and with a healthy line up announced for Christmas 2008 and beyond, it's becoming a lot easier to imagine that ten year vision becoming a reality.

Here, in all its glory: Sony's vision for the future of gaming...



THE PSP

The PSP has been a real dark horse so far this year, with top quality games such as *Chains of Olympus*, *Patapon*, and *Echochrome* selling bucketloads - Sony's Jack Tretton acknowledged this, and assured gamers that this success will continue into the future.

Resistance: Retribution

Ooh! A new *Resistance* - on PSP! This smartly moves the franchise into the third person (PSP has struggled with FPS titles in the past) and looks very, very promising.



Loco Roco 2

Huzzah! We loved *Loco Roco* and a sequel has been long overdue. Super sugary, world-tilting, dangerously cute genius awaits

PSN

Truly our surprise package of 2008 - with stellar titles such as *Pixel Junk Monsters* sucking up our game-time - Sony look set to plough this path with more incredible PSN goodness.

Ratchet and Clank Future: Quest for Booty

This truly surprised us: an entirely new *Ratchet and Clank* game, exclusive to the PlayStation Network. This title follows from where *Tools of Destruction* left off.

The Rest...

Pixel Junk Eden, *Fat Princess*, *f1ower*, *Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists of Plastic*, *Crash Commando*, *PAIN*, *Amusement Park*



CONFERENCE IN NUMBERS...

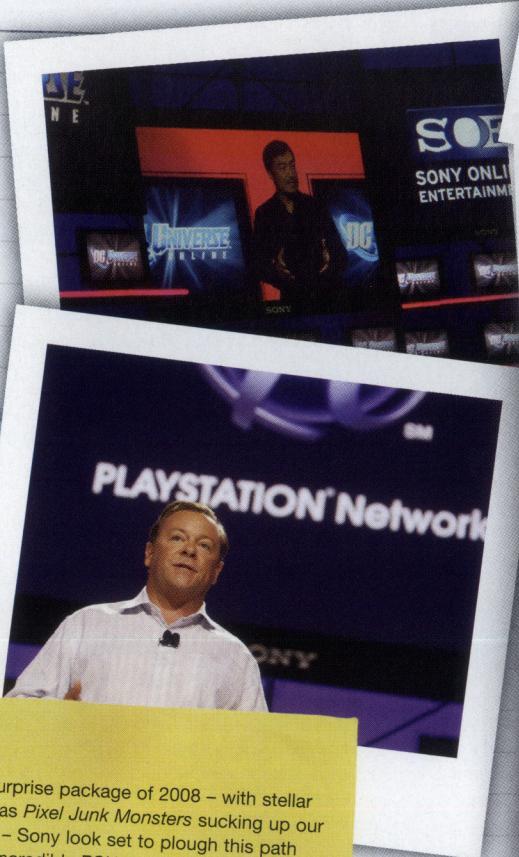
Sadly, even the Sony press conference indulged itself in some coma inducing statistic mongering, the likes of which plague all of these shindigs. Garr...

Oh, but wait a minute, it was actually awesome - since the whole "look at how much money we're all making from you suckers" section was aided and abetted by *LittleBigPlanet*. Confused? Well, basically the guys from Media Molecule had Sackboy race through a level, with craploads of interactive graphs - still better than a powerpoint presentation. Here's a quick breakdown...

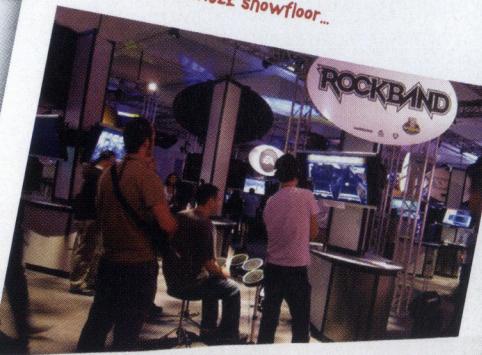
- * \$6.6 billion made already in the first six months of 2008
- * 1.8 million PS3s sold, and 1.6 PSPs sold
- * Sony planning to move into Latin America! Viva la PS3!

Oh, and *LittleBigPlanet* is coming out in October - Hurrah!

9:00am - Before the Sony conference. I snuck in to check the showroom floor. What a disappointment. In the good old days it could take 20 minutes to get from one appointment to the next. Now days everything is behind closed doors, which means without a booking, you'll see nothing.



This was the WHOLE showfloor...



BAM!

The big SONY announcements at E3...

God of War III

Whammy! Not a lot was shown, just a simple teaser trailer, which looked like pre-rendered CG, but this game makes us all hard in the pants. "In the end, there will only be chaos" is the tagline of the trailer, which shows Kratos looming above a dank, ruined environment with a typical menacing glare. We need more dammit!



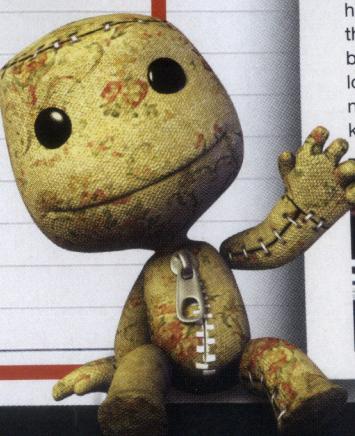
InFamous

InFamous is a brand new franchise exclusive to the PS3. An open world action game in the vein of *Prototype*, *InFamous* is looking very polished at this stage, and demonstrated a whole range of interesting game mechanics, including climbing, magic, and genuinely affecting choices that will define your gaming experience.



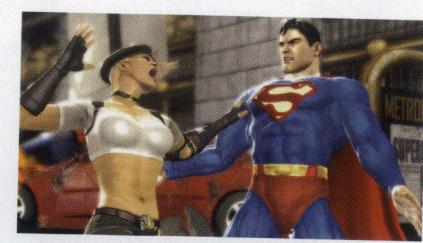
Massive Action Game

256 players online. Yeah, you heard. We have absolutely no idea how in the blue hell this is going to work, and a 2 minute long, blatantly CGI, intro trailer shed little light. It looks like a shooter of some kind, with huge numbers of troops storming a base of some kind. We're intrigued by the concept.



STILL DAY TWO!

2:00pm - No PR person can be found!



The Wheelman

Publisher: Midway **Release:** Early 2009

A digitised Vin Diesel frantically throws himself behind the wheel of anything that moves in the city of Barcelona. Coming out of retirement, this wheelman will jump into a smart car if it means making a speedy 'getaway', which perhaps might have been a nifty name for this one had it not been taken a number of times already. This could essentially be any driving game, unstable cops and all, except for the 'cinematics' displayed when you pull a Cyclone - a 180° spin of the car that allows you to shoot at those pursuing you before spinning back and continuing on your way or an Air Jack, where you ditch your car when driving by jumping to a car nearby.

Sounds great, plays not so great. Graphics are very PS2 but the storyline should be solid enough but looks unlikely to blast through the genre's conventions.

MK Vs. DC Universe

Publisher: Midway **Release:** Late 2008

Let's make this clear, you can beat the hell outta Superman and he is gonna get MESSED UP! Blood seeping from his lip, lyra suit hanging by threats, eyes bulging. What more could you want? Well, Sonya also struggles to hold it together when she's taken a couple knocks around the jaw and how she keeps that rag of a top on, we'll leave up to your imagination.

And yes there is a story mode, following two paths - one on the dark side of DC, the other on the massacring side of Mortal Kombat but let's get real, this is all about the battles. Whether you choose Catwoman or Liu Kang you're going to get a good fight. Characters are evenly weighted and button mashers will not prosper. With characters from each universe being rolled out bit by bit we expect some serious bone crunching and spin stealing to come our way.

This is Vegas

Publisher: Midway **Release:** 2009

Bright lights, big city! Vegas we are here. In a big year for open world crime games, *This is Vegas*, the lesser known of the three biggies, will have to fight and that it does. A game easily broken up into four types of gameplay - Gambling, Partying, Fighting and Driving, on paper it's hard to see how it differentiates its self. Then big headed club mascots shamble around bearing a striking resemblance to Bob Hawke. Um... yeah. A messed up businessman is trying to make Vegas 'family friendly'. Your job is to mess with that plan by growing a rep and returning the party town to its former glory. You'll cheat, you'll brawl, and you'll even take on some extremely dangerous women. If you're going to 'go hard' you might as well get a decent laugh out of it, the only worry for us is that we saw the same build that was shown to us back in April, again!

3:05pm



Rise of the Argonauts

Publisher: Codemasters **Release:** 2009

Although it looks like an action game, akin to *God of War*, first impressions are misleading. This is far more of an RPG than we thought it would be. Decisions matter - and your relationship with the four chosen Greek gods matter.

Notably, dialogue choices affect your favour with the Gods, and they also serve to level up your character: pick the dialogue option associated with Athena and you'll boost your charisma related skills. Other skills also level up through use, based on the same assumption that a particular God is thrilled by the fact that you're swinging a mace or casting a lightning spell in their honour.

With a September release date, we doubt whether there's time to polish the visuals shown in the E3 build, but the core RPG mechanics look neat.



Damnation

Publisher: Codemasters **Release:** 2008

Based on what we saw at E3, if *Damnation* meets its ambitious October release date, it'll either be terrible or the developers will have killed themselves getting it ready for primetime. Conceptually it intrigues; a self-styled 'American epic' that mixes the wild frontiers of Civil War era USA with early industrialisation to create a cool steampunk vibe.

At heart it's a third-person shooter with two-player co-op through the campaign, although there are three characters along for the ride. Beyond a standard cover system, the apparent twist is the verticality of the environments and the acrobatic way each character can navigate them.

We were shown an area that plunged down from a cliff, across a wide ravine and back up a tiered town to a bridge across a canyon. But the movement around this region was far more akin to *Tomb Raider* than *Spider-Man* or even *Prince of Persia*. More importantly, it looked really clunky and glitchy, which is to be expected but not when the game's launching in mere months. We're hoping for the best with this one.

3:45 - I'm now late for EA !!!



This film has advertising approval.
Check the classification closer to
the release date.

ONLY AT THE MOVIES AUGUST 28

LAWRENCE GORDON
PRODUCTIONS



www.hellboy2.com.au

DIRECTED BY GUILLERMO DEL TORO
BY



PG-13
RATED PG-13
BY THE MPAA

A UNIVERSAL PICTURE
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3:50pm

HANDS ON...

Mirror's Edge

Publisher: EA Release: Early 2009

Stylistically *Mirror's Edge* has been turning heads. Not only is the female lead striking but the colour palette has been so heavily restricted that it can't help but stand out visually. Now it's making waves for the gameplay!

From early in the show developers, PR and journo's search for the buzz. What's good? What's bad? And which games are hidden in the dark rooms that only a select few will even hear about. Early on word got out that people were actually getting to play *Mirror's Edge*, the buzz grew.

Clips of Faith running across roof tops, sliding into storm drains, and stringing together sequences of fast paced acrobatics, instantly scream button mashing combos at high speed in an attempt to avoid falling to your death. Not so here. DICE has changed the first person experience by reducing controls to just two buttons and the analogue stick. Pushing forward you jump or slide with a tap of the shoulder button or trigger.

Best of all DICE are praising the PS3 saying it "allows us to push the resolution of our textures much higher". Disappointingly, we didn't get our hands on the combat, but are aware that you can go through the game without ever firing a gun. In addition, the fighting and shooting demonstration flowed with the same fluidity seen in the game's free running. Interestingly, as a courier Faith can't carry a gun and run so she needs to disarm enemies in order to defend herself. With little HUD, sleek graphics and a well judged puzzle and strategy, the game left us jumping for joy. We can't wait for more!



*Mirror's edge - sharp and jaggy, watch
you don't cut yourself*



Dead Space

Publisher: EA Release: 2008

Strategic Dismemberment continues to impress: screenshots can't do justice to being attacked by mutated people glued to the wall, shooting them in the head and still having the little bastards rush you or throw arms at you in a calculated hug of death. Not to mention the gore factor that seems to have been ramped up every time we experience more of the game. Previously off many people's radar it had people queued up to get a glimpse.

Mercenaries 2

Publisher: EA Release: 2008

On a map eight kilometres by eight kilometres you can do a lot of damage. The capacity for total destruction in your hands, with weapons such as the MOAB (Mother of all bombs): expect a big BOOM from this one. Set in Venezuela, this open world gang game will have you corrupting those around you as you work with five factions. It's a 'LittleBig-Just Cause' due the extreme carnage and silliness at your disposal.



Rasengan! Sorry, I mean HADOKEN!

5:17: Snuck in to see Streetfighter IV.
FIGHT! Got my butt kicked... snuck out.

5:34 Boarding a bus to another conference

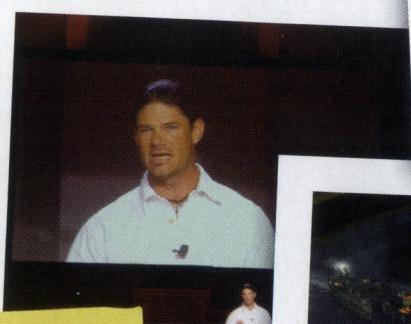


7:00pm - ACTIVISION Press Conference

What a way to boycott a conference! Originally a no show, Activision booked out a night of the show to update us on their upcoming line up. While we should have been typing away in our cold, disheartening hotel rooms we were forced to eat, drink and be merry for half an hour before the hard work kicked off! Feel my pain people.



"Where's your cap dude - it's red cap day punk. Put it on or I'll beat your ass!"



UPPING IT!

Bond's Solace

After much talk from the head of Danjaq, who own the rights to the *Bond* franchise, we get some sneaky peeping-tom action from Bond as he slips onto a balcony and breaks necks. The game pops from 1st to 3rd person – kinda clunky and not very Bond. November 08 release people!



World at War

Mark Lamia, head of Treyarch blazes in, with Kiefer Sutherland's voice leading squads into battle in the background. Multiplayer modes will include four-player online co-op and two-player local split screen. Tanks, fiery explosions, bombs, bombs, bombs!



Touring

The battle is on! *Guitar Hero World Tour* vs that other one. Before we choose closer to the time of release, if *Rock Band* releases, it's been made quite clear that this band war will come down to track list vs. peripherals.



ROCKIN' THE USA!

If you're gonna pimp your wares then bringing in *Paramore*'s lead singer Hayley Williams, ushered in by wolf whistles, and Travis Barker, looking seriously unimpressed by the crappy MC, to talk up *Guitar Hero World Tour* is definitely the way to go. Williams is playable in the game, as is one of the bands songs!



BREAK OUT PERFORMANCE

When the 'Neversoft Band' steps up to play 'Hot for Teacher' by Van Halen, the very unrocking looking lead guitarist pulls off the track on expert, barely even checking the monitor as he riffs the song into oblivion...

NOOBS

Raven will release Singularity

The trailer for this first person game shows a city and ship fall apart and mend its self back together, as if hit by an apocalyptic event. The stark cinematics, and surprisingly competent voice acting, has us intrigued...



Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2: Fusion

It's coming our way. Not the biggest of announcements but sure to be a moneymaker. You'll be able to 'fuse' two character abilities together – ooh, comic-book fanboy explosion in my pants!



Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

Yes, there is a game! June 2009.



Wolfenstein

Co-founder of id software Todd Hollenshead struts in with OSA agent BJ Blazkowicz ready to blast his way to world domination.

Web of shadows – *Spider-Man* wall slinging combat, we've been here before.



FEATURE

E3 Coverage special

DAY THREE EXPERIENCING LA!

9:00am

HANDS ON...

Fallout 3

Publisher: Bethesda Release: TBC

You know that moment in *Oblivion* when you emerge from the gloomy Imperial City sewers and gaze out over the eastern aspect of Lake Rumare swathed in gorgeous sunlight? *Fallout 3* offers an ironic twist: stepping out from the idyllic Vault into post-apocalyptic Washington DC may take you from dark to light, but you find ruin, desperation and collapse rather than a grand empire at its height of its power. Are you sure you want to enter this place?

Well, yes, you do. Like *Oblivion*, Bethesda once again gives you a massive open world to explore and countless quests to complete in (mostly) whatever order you wish. So, when we got the chance to get hands-on, we figured we would test this out, and so we left the Vault, ignored the main quest advice to head to the town of Megaton, and just started walking into the wasteland.

We stumbled onto a hooker living in a shack who had financial troubles with her ex-pimp (we helped her out); an abandoned high school now inhabited by bandits and mutant ants (we killed them all); a collapsed highway that lead me straight into a radioactive river (which we fell in); and the schematics for a unique hunting rifle (which we could later assemble once we'd found the necessary parts). We didn't really achieve much of significance, but we had a blast just exploring this incredible world.

The skill system seems intuitive yet rich in diversity; the VATS combat is brutally efficient and the atmosphere delivers in spades. Now if only the OFLC will have overturned its decision to refuse classification in Australia by the time this article appears in print...

10:00am



We snuck into the Bethesda E3 party!
SURPRISE...



LEGO Batman

Publisher: Warner Bros Release: 2008

Evil characters are just BETTER! And in this extremely OTT world of heroes clomping around you'll find more stupidity, more crazy antics and more 'special' abilities at your disposal. Batman and sidekick Robin have four suits to assist in their crime fighting while Riddler can use mind control, Penguin unleashes his Suicide Penguin bombs and Bane (he just breaks LEGO backbone). Best of all they are looking to move into other series and have not ruled out downloadable content.

Project Origin

Publisher: Warner Bros Release: 2009

There is no such thing as 'Thank heaven for little girls' in this game. Alma is back with that freaky arsed red dress of hers continuing to do our brain damage. Hoping to ensure the game will surprise you and ensuring the frenetic pacing, PO switches between horror and rapid fire gun play without a minutes notice. While the HUD gives you a heads up on your enemies' positions it can't assist you against a stepped up AI that will detect you, predict and interpret your movements and take you down.



11:04am

OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2

Publisher: Codemasters Release: 2009

Ambitious is the only way to describe *Operation Flashpoint 2*, a military simulation that prizes authenticity above all. Across a 220km² island in northern Japan, you'll rise through the ranks of the US army from an infantry grunt to eventually commanding whole squads, calling in airstrikes, and utilising over 50 different vehicles.

Codemasters are keen to demonstrate what they term the "attrition of war". This isn't a series of canned levels you're playing through; this is a persistent world where decisions you make on the battlefield resonate throughout the rest of the theatre. Bringing this goal to life is over 100 soldiers on screen at once, each directed by an AI that adapts to situations on the fly.

If you're keen to get deep and dirty with a shooter that emphasises strategy over the heavily scripted sequences of something like *Call of Duty*, then *Operation Flashpoint 2* is worth keeping an eye on.



12:57pm - Snuck into
TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD!
Lots of Lara running around in scuba gear, pique your interest?

11:38am

DARKSIDERS: WRATH OF WAR

Publisher: THQ Release: 2009

Apocalypse, Armageddon, War! Gather these buzz words and throw them together as you climb through five dungeons in a sophisticated version of *Zelda* and you've got most people's attention. Throw in comic book legend Joe Mad as creative director and WINNER! With a hint of *Shadow of the Colossus* as War, one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, strides around sand on his steed challenging mega beasts and a whiff of *Prince of Persia* with acrobatics and elegance and we've listed this one as a 2009 epic.



By the power of Grayskull... I have the POWER!

RED FACTION: GUERILLA

Publisher: THQ Release: 2009

The man has a big hammer over his shoulder and somehow roaming the streets like this is less threatening than picking up a concealed weapon! Fair enough this is a mining town where money is tight and modifying what you have will get you far. Not quite the same thing when you modify a building with a mech but it's great for shits and giggles.

RF: Guerilla, the first third-person game for the series, is set 50 years after the first game with a massive change in the Earth Defense Force manifesto. They got power hungry and now you must build morale, devise a plan and gather troops. But watch out cause too much of a stir and they'll send in people to sort you out. Keep that hammer close and wait for more details because we like the destruction!



Ever feel like the world is falling down

1:30pm

Saints Row 2

Publisher: THQ Release: Oct 2008

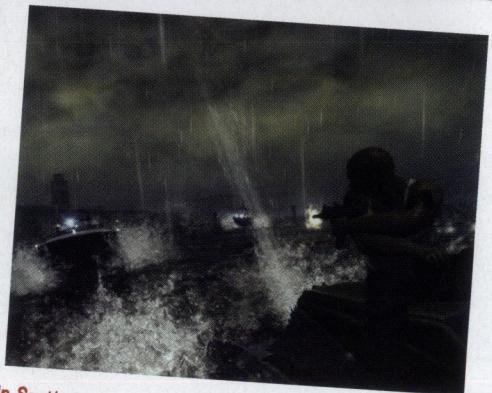
We wish we could tell you all the awesome stuff we did during our time with *Saints Row 2* at E3. We wish we could tell you about all the vehicles we commandeered to nefarious effect or about all the weapons we wielded to cause untold chaos and mayhem. We'd like to be able to mention the enormous array of quite simply insane side missions where we sprayed sewage on pedestrians while

driving a dumptruck.

But sadly we didn't actually see any of these aspects of the game. Instead, Volition presented a quick look at the character customisation and walked us through the opening two sequences. So we saw the devs make a female character with a hot body, a clown face and a male voice. In fact, the range of options here is phenomenal – in addition to morphing your avatar's body in all directions, you can even choose their walking animation and facial expression. But then the game started and it was a

typical tutorial-style opening level, all basic shooting and follow the arrow, transitioning into an on-rails boat shooter. Yawn.

For a game we'd previously been hyped for as promising all the over-the-top ridiculousness missing from *GTA IV*, this was a resounding disappointment. We know all the outrageous stupidity is still in the game, but for some reason Volition decided not to show us. Truly bizarre. *Saints Row 2* is much better than its E3 showing demonstrated. Hopefully we'll have more to talk about soon.



In South Central LA the "float-by" is born...

2:30pm



Final Fantasy XIII

Just to make things ridiculous the *FFXIII* interview was nine blocks from the LA convention centre. Flustered and sweaty due to LA smog trapping in the heat I arrived at the Sheraton to be told that they were running late but to make up for it we would be given an hour's time instead of 30 minutes with Producer, Yoshinori Kitase and Corporate Executive Shinji Hasimoto.

I'm going to be late for EA, again!



SQUARE ENIX MOMENTS:

- * On their relationship with Sony after *FFXIII* is announced as multi-format. Hasimoto says that it is "Unchanged" with two new PSP titles "strengthening the relationship". Phew got by that one!
- * Kitase says the PS3 title is almost done and that it will be localised for the US, Europe and Australia before they start on any 'other' formats.
- * The story is based around a "crystal mythology" similar to how Greek mythology has gods that come into play. While this is "not part of the world" it's where the story is drawn from.

4:00pm (back on track! However I missed an appointment)

Borderlands

Publisher: 2K Games **Release:** 2009

As Keanu said in the good *Matrix* movie: "Guns. Lots of guns." He could well have been talking about *Borderlands*, the sci-fi shooter with role-playing elements from Gearbox, creator of the *Brothers in Arms* series. Developer claims of over 600,000 guns would seem to qualify for the term "lots" in anyone's book. Although the immediate question is: why?

As an RPG (role-playing shooter), *Borderlands* revels in customisation. You pick a class at the outset, but from there you're constantly levelling up various stats, picking up loot, upgrading equipment and all sorts of ways of differentiating your character from your friend's. Co-op play is the reason: four players can tackle the game's main missions simultaneously while your character persists across games – you can take your levelled character and jump in to another player's campaign.

Vehicles and an open world complete the picture, although it still feels fairly early. The AI seems uninteresting, environments a bit on the bland side, and the level design – certainly outside of the open world areas – appears linear. But as a 2009 release, there's plenty of time to improve those aspects and, at the very least, there's nothing like this on PS3.



4:33pm

Bioshock

Buzz killer! Bioshock was in my top 5 games of 2007. So when PS3 is going to get exclusive new content I'm itching. Unfortunately I had to listen to lines like "Oh no Richard don't do that you'll fall, oh no, you fell" throughout the demo. Understandably my experience was ruined and I walked away with very little new knowledge. The basics went something like this. There will be new downloadable content known as the "Chambers of thrills", which will take place outside the story and require you to explore the tool sets of the game. Set up as a set of challenging rooms they'll be accessible at anytime and range from puzzles to flat out tradition combat. I admit I still want more little sister action.



5:12pm

Alpha Protocol

Espionage, such a great word but a world little explored unless you're a double 0 or Bourne! Now a rather raw, yet talent agent must choose sides, play the factions against each other and talk his way to the top. Mostly predictable the dialogue response system opens the game to a more 'choose your own adventure' styled game with a great deal of shooting and bone breaking. This dialogue not only provides its point of difference but also allows you to choose your persona. Let an evil dictator live, ahh you're a nice guy, pull out a gun and plug him, oops you're bad. It's a little more complicated but how you play will affect how much you'll have to cover your arse from a major butt kicking.



5:38pm (last but not least)

Stormrise

Aussies just do it better! We proved it time and time again at this E3, Creative Assembly flashing their wares just added to the celebration.

If *Stormrise* was a movie we'd be rating it a likely 'sleeper hit', that is unless SEGA pull out the big bucks and start flashing them based purely on the potential of this real-time strategy game. With experience in the genre, they of *Total War*, present a world rebuilding itself with two factions – Echelon, technically advanced and Sai, a tribal group who have adapted and evolved at war. With nine units per side it would be easy to get confused if the targeting system wasn't so simple with a whip select motion allowing you to bounce between deployed troops on rooftops, ground level or below ground. With mind control units and mech at your disposal this first look more than impressed.

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie... you know what to do!



* 6:18pm - On a bus to Santa Monica, Sony wants to party! (see page 43)

DAY FOUR

9:00am

HANDS ON...

Prince of Persia

Publisher: Ubisoft Release: 2008

After three days of running around, doing backflips and pulling off intense acrobatics to dodge my fellow man in a highly pixel saturated environment it would take either a corrupted mind or an enlightening moment to lift your spirits. Then a shining Prince smiling sweetly brought light back to the world.

At first *Prince of Persia*'s illustrative imagery was thought to be nothing more than concept art but as the developer explained the more powerful PS3 processing engine allows you to "play in these illustrations" unlike past renditions of the series.

In a world filled with the black ooze of corruption, you're free to roam an open environment as the Prince who has yet to hit his prime and instead is currently devoting his life to the fine things - wine, woman and carpets. His buddy, Elika, whom he views as a bit of a looker is the responsible level headed leader who needs his assistance to help drive away the corruption.

Gameplay will offer a number of paths through the world instead of the previous linear design. The \triangle button will be used to control Elika in combo moves like double jumps and swinging, along with her magic summoning abilities used in combat. Unlike previous games hoards of enemies will not be threatening your existence, instead these 'hunters' will come at you one at a time backed by 'organic traps' that will zap you if you don't avoid them, like the ooze. The glove will allow you to hang on as well as "grip fall" providing you the ability to travel in any direction.

POP is solid. It's innovative, it's clever and it threw a bit of swing into the life of one very tired Aussie Journo.

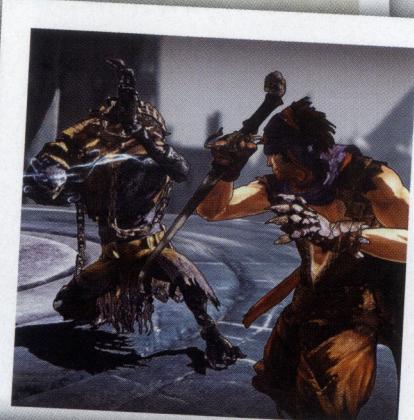
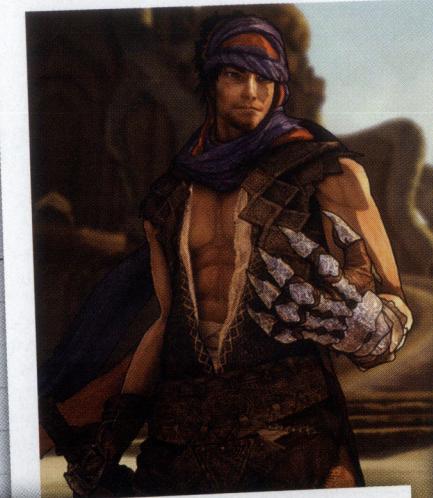
Tom Clancy's Endwar

Publisher: Ubisoft Release: 2008

When three super powers want to blow the shit outta something it's going to result in a pretty messy end to something, maybe the world, maybe just Paris, who's to know. So when *Endwar* looks to simulate World War III in the year 2020 the theatre of war that plays out may look a little desolate.

Each 'faction' has its strengths and weaknesses. Russia is low tech but aggressive, America is all about balance and Europe is always on the defensive. Playing as each you need to play to their strengths, growing your seven units from battle to battle.

Most talked about though is the voice recognition software, while remarkable at picking up anyone's voice to direct the masses it often seems gimmicky when you can either say a string of commands or simply push \times . The non-vocal interface being as strong and well built as it is, why bother?



Even I'm wondering how you stay in something like that!!



Far Cry 2

Publisher: Ubisoft Release: 2009

As we found with *BioShock*, how you demonstrate a game can affect how people react to a game. When a member of the development team rushes you wanting to drag you into their world and show you all they have to offer it can instantly make you more accepting of the experience.

The search to kill 'The Jackal' needs no pomp and ceremony. *Far Cry 2* looks as good as it plays and as you crawl through the dense jungles of a fictitious African country you'll be able to control how the story plays out. Some may want to sneak around using stealth, sniping guards in their way using the cover of night or the bold can charge in and just blow the crap out of everything without caring about consequences. You'll need to be constantly vigilant, anything you do will instantly have consequences, fire a gun in the wilderness and they'll know you're out there and they'll come looking. Ensure you make acquaintances because when your weapons jam they can revive you.



Ubisoft US boss Laurent Detoc - "E3 this year is terrible. The world used to come to E3. Now it's like a pipe-fitters show in the basement"

10:00am - THE SONY EXCLUSIVES LINE UP...

KILLZONE 2

As Sev and Alpha Team chomp through Corinth River following a stream of Helghast devastation the stark vista's only colour is provided by the sparks of orange fire. Welcome to *Killzone 2* a game that many have ripped pieces from since they first showed a clip at E3 way back in May 2005.

While still a pre-alpha build *KZ2* is shaping up to introduce a boot to the face of those that questioned its validity. This gray industrial world made up of concrete and steel gives you little time to stand around and marvel at the depth of view or the rich cinematics.

While ultimately following a linear path the level design is so competent that it allows and even encourages exploration. Coupled with the enemy AI shifting to meet your advancements and outmaneuver your attacks from both flanks and rear provides a feeling of chaos with no time to stand around and lap up surroundings. You can't charge into this one like John Matrix and come out without a scratch, you're gonna bite it and hard.

Equally as responsive are your buddies. Whether part of a two man or four man squad the AI allies will provide cover fire and boost you up to higher ground to assist success in the carnage. Reviving them is as simple as a tap on the shoulder, bringing them back after up to a couple minutes.

While some movement is still a little clumsy, character animations in particular the range of expressions and eye contact will draw you in. We saw no lag and while always on our toes we're eager to dive into the meat and bones of the story, try some multiplayer and explore further levels before declaring it a masterpiece. However, we've still got time to remove drool from our chins - February 2009 is a long way away.



*Killzone 2 - 2008
Beefed up and smoking*



*Killzone - 2004
Attention people we have a gun!*



RESISTANCE 2

There is no doubt that the game looks fast and big, one look at that *Cloverfield* sized beast, the Leviathan and you know you're never going to be able to take that down with a wee little gun. So they've improved the weapons, added a few more like a magnum that can be used to detonate traps in a sequence and a semi-automatic rifle called "The Marksman" all to match the scale.

While the textures and lighting of the creatures impresses the surrounding city gets lost and the gameplay looks seriously linear. So we jump to another section of the gameplay, the streets of Chicago as grims, the undead people left to rot charge you in mass. It's a massive step up. Intense, as well as intensive it will require strategy, timing and concentration. It's an adrenaline jolt. Finally, dipping into multiplayer you'll have co-op online through a story driven campaign where you choose to be a medic, soldier or member of special ops working together.



Quote of the show:

"Your goal is to rescue your beloved princess from the enemy dungeon. There's a catch though: your adversary has been stuffing her with food to fatten her up and it's going to take most of your army working together to carry her back across the battlefield."

- Fat Princess, a multi-player RTS for PS3.

Resistance: Retribution

In the same way that *Killzone: Liberation* filled the gap in the Helghast world, *Retribution* will add to your Chimera experience. Surprisingly it was playable in the dark, dark corner of Sony's back room. Obviously in early stages it provides big scale action for a handheld, with "aim assist" providing a unique targeting system using a box in the centre of the screen to latch onto targets. It makes for quick elimination. With numerous *Syphon Filters* in their back pocket Bends Studio is likely to thrive with this conflict.



MotorStorm Pacific Rift

Another pre-alpha game with a much closer release date this lush, high-speed beefed up racer is unlikely to disappoint. Opening itself up to 16-player online with a shiny two or four-player split screen the track design is packed with alternative paths, jumps and tank turrets ready to fire. Cars and environments have an "extensive, physics-based damage" system, charge a tree and you'll both come off second best. Adding a bit of bump and grind to the play you can hit the square button to attack and mess up others on the track. With only a limited amount of tracks released we're hoping to see more extensive pathways to add to the already impressive looking graphical upgrade.



LittleBigPlanet

User generated content, get used to hearing it because it's hanging around. In days gone by the only way gamers could mess with their fave games was mods, now with games like *Spore* who saw one million characters created in the first week of the character creator software being launched, 'we' create the gaming experience. *LittleBigPlanet* is a hands on game, while a platformer at its basis, grabbing the controller and taking your sackboy or girl through the interactive world collecting and unlocking is the only way to truly grasp the experience. I dare you not to smile while taking on a 'Boss Battle' with a fat paper cutout mob boss! The idea is you learn how the world works as you play and then with simple controls make more levels meaning *LBP* is endless in length and enjoyment!



InFamous

Sucker Punch's new game is just a little bit sly! It takes an unlikely Joe, named Cole, and throws an explosion his way that eliminates everything within six blocks, except him, and then makes you deal with the fallout.

Born is a city of heroes, or villains, not unlike that of Gotham or the comic world of *DMZ*. Cole, now with the ability to zap the crap out everything with his electricity-based powers, has a city of technology at his disposal. The contributing factor is you! That's when things get messy. If you go on an untamed spree your powers will reflect this giving you no control, if you're all mummy's boy about it and help old ladies across the road you'll be rewarded with control.

It's rare for a developer to name-drop so many games and influences but affirms the passion for their product. Sucker Punch's vertical rise is sure to be assisted by the introduction of Cole as he climbs into the neon signs of *InFamous*.



Then we were snuck into see another game... signing a NDA on the way in!
Next issue sorry.

POOL PARTY!

SONY localises their press conference

Just to prove that Sony isn't all about a big stale room, the European/Australian gathering was held in Santa Monica around two pools. With the sushi, cheese and an open bar flowing freely set up to get the exhausted wordsmiths in the mood for more info president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe David Reeves took to the mic.

- * We're getting the 80G PS3. VICTORY! But it's currently undated. It'll be bundled with an extra Dualshock. However Australia has "a few more 40GB [models] than others, but they have some promotions in place to move them through."
- * A new Platinum range (\$49.95) of games has just been released as of August 4. *Uncharted*, *Heavenly Sword*, *MotorStorm* are amongst the releases with third party titles to follow.
- * 12 PlayStation announcements to be made at Leipzig

Kicking back

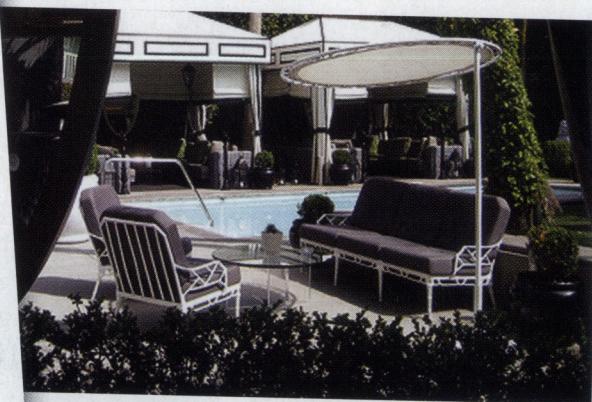
The next thing I know I've been grabbed by the *Video Hits* guys to give my picks of E3 2008. Check the bags under my eyes!



The scene of the crime. This is living!



David Reeves breaks it down into simple language even Aussies will get!



Hanging out for...

- * Mirror's Edge
- * LittleBigPlanet
- * Prince of Persia
- * Dead Space
- * Resident Evil 5

Kinda worried about...

- * The Wheelman
- * Damnation
- * Lack of announcements
- * Ridiculous showroom floor
- * Future of E3
- * Lack of PSP

High expectations in early days...

- * Operation Flashpoint 2
- * Loco Roco 2
- * God of War III

2:00pm

With four blisters, two broken nails and a bruise the size of a small child, I'm off to play Resident Evil 5! Good times...

WHAT'S THE BUZZ!

So I've mentioned it a couple times and it sounds pretty wanky but while I saw and played around 100 games in four days the same words and phrases seem to pop up everywhere. Sometimes funny, sometimes ridiculous here's what they said:

- * Verticality. An unnamed PR person thought he came up with this one but no matter what accent you say it with everyone thought they were clever when they threw it around.
- * "This will be the FIRST real RTS to console" - I guess it depends on their release date but at least five games claimed to do it first and best. Apparently it's the "last frontier of gaming"
- * Factions. Whether you're in open world crime, world wars or fantasy epics you gotta have some factions to work with, against or for.
- * HUD. Seems like they are no longer cool with many people removing them or presenting them in a "new" light.
- * User Generated content. Sony has made it clear - Put it in or get axed.
- * Dynamic DNA. Constantly updating strings of real world data used to update *NBA Live 09*. PLEASE find a way to bring this to *FIFA* and other sports games online.
- * Could be a journo obsession but "what engine is the game running on?" was the second most asked question after "can you talk about the multiplayer?" which always got the response "we're not talking about that at this time."
- * AI. Not a surprise but you couldn't go past a game without hearing that they've "stepped up the AI" they all think, move, react, "constantly adapt" just like a real human. Although they all seemed to take more bullets to the head than most humans do.
- * Jamming weapons. Darn, more chance of dying mid game.

EXCLUSIVE looks at the very best

PREVIEWS

PS3 PS2

■ GENRE: SURVIVAL HORROR
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ RELEASE: 2009
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
■ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
■ WEB: www.residentevil.com/5/



■ Stop or my mum will shoot!



RESIDENT EVIL 5

How will you face the end?

Adrenaline – a catecholamine secreted by the adrenal medulla in response to stress (trade name Adrenalin), which stimulates autonomic nerve action often caused by gripping your controller so tightly that the flesh wears thin causing lesions to weep a chunky liquid serum tinted by blood. It's also a sign that zombie action is heading back in droves and we've geared up for some chainsaw action!

Previously the dark of night would have been my preferred time to launch into this nervy bit of action but under the stress of an immense event, on little sleep, running purely on caffeine Resident Evil 5 instantly hit a chord with my heart. No, I'm not talking love, it was more a

coursing that hardened to a pounding as the walls came falling in. It seems that the inhabitants of Kijuju, a shanty town in Africa, weren't too happy about Chris Redfield and partner, Sheva Alomar spying on the assassination taking place in the town centre. The exact point where control became ours and it was time to start firing.

As fate would have it Chris and Sheva are trapped within a small, and thanks to next gen, very destructible shack. No longer are you safe putting your back to the wall and firing till you've killed the buggers, now they'll just bust through the walls.

So as you cover the windows with bookshelves, either as Redfield or with

a quick tap of the **A** button Sheva, you need to search out the best vantage point quickly picking them off till you can provide yourself with space to escape. Unfortunately, as you start to gain some control destructibility strikes again when a behemoth armed with a hammer axe takes a swing through the building eliminating a wall. Time to run people!

As you do you'll be attacked from all sides, flicking the right analogue stick allows you to do a quick 180, picking off a few before flicking back and taking out a few more.

A heavy reliance is still weighted on pushing **X** in order to pick up ammo, health packs along with climbing ladders and jumping. While the controls



could be called out dated, especially with most games allowing you to do this automatically, this more traditional approach to the controls does greatly build the desperation in the player as you struggle to clear your path and move on with the story. This is especially so when an axe is centimetres from your head, you're desperately short on ammo and you're frantically wiggling the analogue stick to break free. It also eliminates the possibility of finding yourself stuck halfway up a ladder trying to fire or jumping onto a rooftop full of zombies without lockin' and

loading. You need to make that decision to go peacefully to a painful death. Push **X** and get in there.

WRONG PLACE, RIGHT MAN!

For many this won't be their first meaningful moment with Chris Redfield. An original playable character in *Res Evil* he has since advanced his career from tracking lost workmates with S.T.A.R.S.' Alpha team to taking advantage of the face to face work experience with the undead becoming a member of the Bio-terrorism Security

Assessment Alliance (BSAA).

It's been 10 years and the man has buffed up. Tracking the source of the virus, he finds himself in Africa, tying together the storylines of *Res Evil 3* and *Code: Veronica X* with this trip to the Dark Continent. As a bigger man he isn't as light on his feet as Leon. He takes up space and as a result lands a meaty punch when surrounded by a population of that has been forcibly infected. His role is to find out who is behind this malevolence, track them and stop them. Not an easy task in a country that he

has no previous experience with. A situation like this calls for a partner. So in steps a member of the African branch of the BSAA.

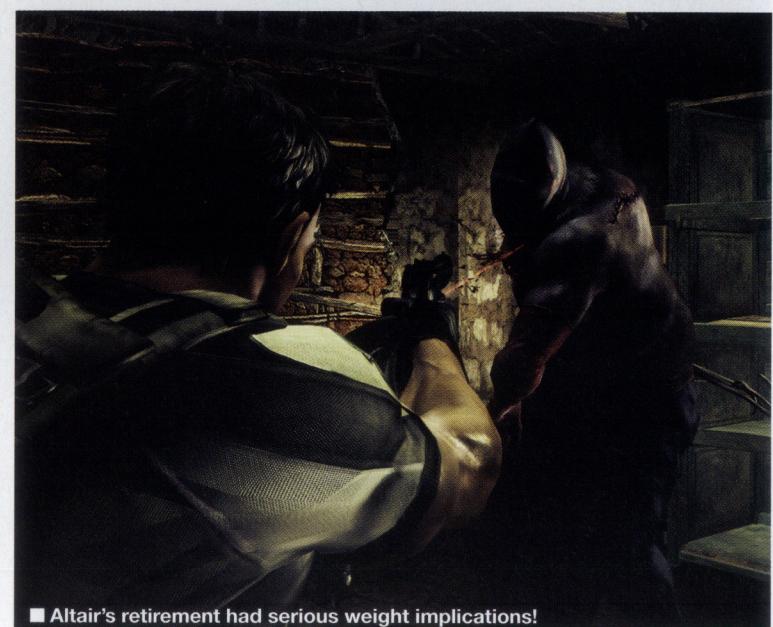
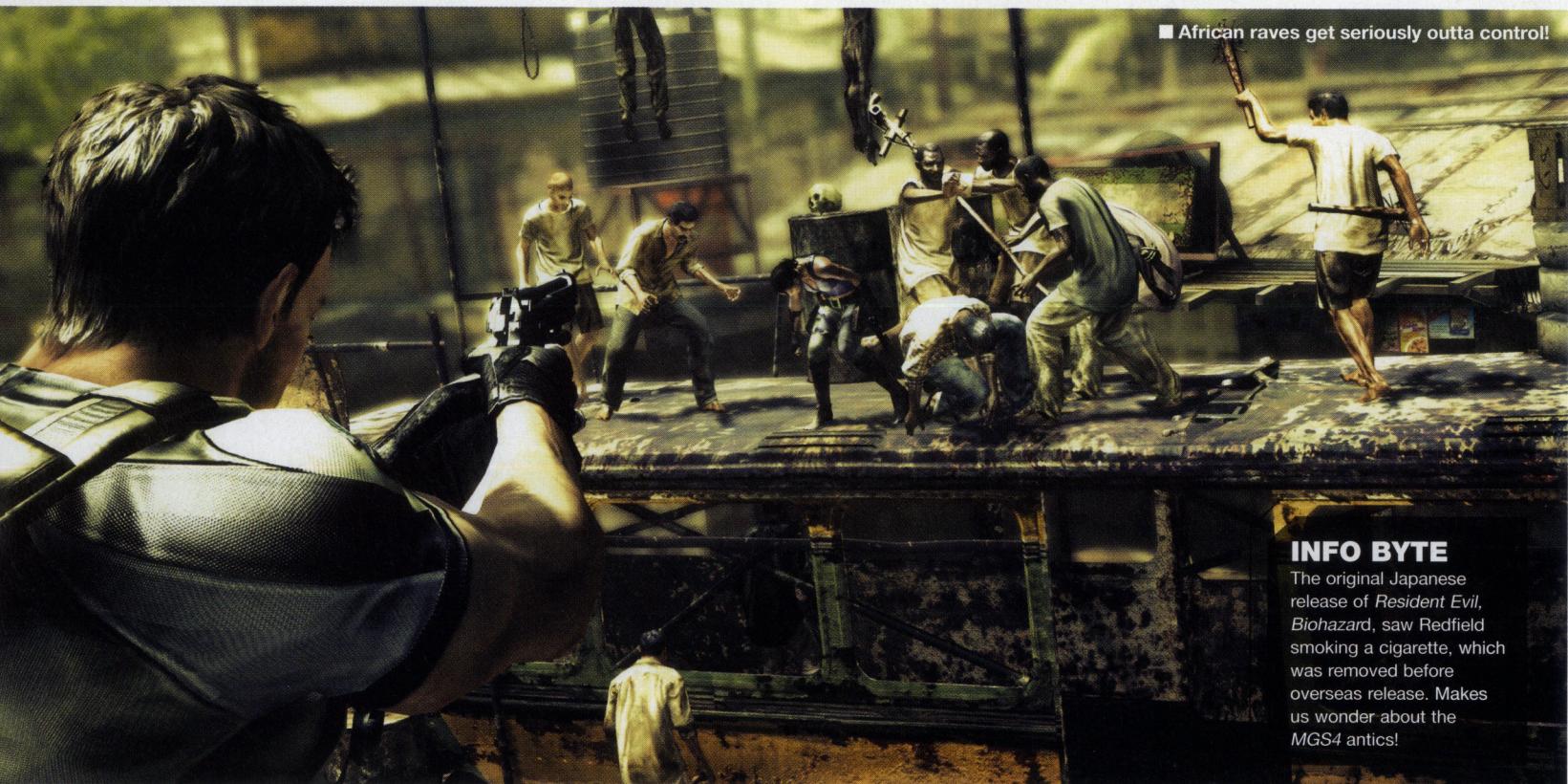
SHEVA...PRINCESS OF POWER

Ashley she ain't, she's packing and she'll unload whether it's to save you or blast the fine locals of an African village in the face.

Meet your partner.

Resident Evil 5 is set up as a co-op game, to be played online, with a buddy with the ability to drop in and out at any time, though you can choose to go it alone. No matter your preference Sheva can really handle a weapon and is appropriately dressed, no short skirts and who the hell carries a cardie through a zombie den?!

“...caused by gripping your controller so tightly that the flesh wears thin causing lesions to weep a chunky liquid serum...”





With an AI player she'll set up cover fire for you, hand you ammo if you're close to running out and will heal you if you're running low with a quick injection. More than just a sidekick she is a valuable member of the team but it is only in missions where you work together that you'll discover the intelligent game design and her purpose.

Players do not always stick together, and can be separated at points during the gameplay, with your life, and death, linked to hers you'll work to protect her and assist her. During one tense moment with Sheva looking for a way to unlock a gate she ends up in a building across from Redfield. With a shotgun it's necessary to pick off the aggressors as she makes a break for it, problem is that she's in what resembles a zombie den and as both characters run from level to

level timing is of the utmost importance. It also gives you the opportunity to shoot off some barrels and be rewarded with hefty explosions and rejoice in gory head explosions if you hit the sweet spot with your shotgun.

CHAINSAW OPERATION GUIDE

In an effort to remember all and get it right reviewers take notes, oddly sometimes our brains are fallible. It can be an extensive list with everything from what you had for lunch through to thoughts like "how fast should the undead move?" For *Resident Evil* I wrote nothing. My brain was so wrapped up in the experience that I came out with blank pages and shaky hands. After just two levels my head was swimming with the possibilities that the gameplay opened up. Flashing from that oh so memorable noise of the

chainsaw starting up to the anticipation felt when rounding corner after corner knowing they were waiting. Recent clips show unexplained hooded characters, the return of the rabid dogs and other unworldly creatures, *Resident Evil 5* is heading towards us with both guns blazing and we've already taken a hit.

— Vanessa Morgan

BOTTOM LINE

- Green circle: Atmosphere and tension
- Green circle: Capable co-op partner
- Red circle: 2009 release

OPS IS...

grabbing a chainsaw

GET REANIMATED!

Flash mobs are so 2006, the way to go is zombie walks. Yeah you heard right. Originating in the grand old US of A, the first of its kind was The Zombie Parade in Sacramento, California and was created to promote a film festival. The idea is to get your undead on and walk around a city in a limp and unanimated fashion, usually spotting large amounts of make-up. The largest of its kind was held in Brisbane with 1,500 undead searching the streets for braaaaaaaaaaaaaains!



EXCLUSIVELY ON



PlayStation Portable

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PG

Mild Violence

HE'S SUAVE AND SOPHISTICATED
HE KNOWS FINE WINES AND FAST CARS
WOMEN THROW THEMSELVES AT HIM
(YUP HE'S THE ONE ON THE RIGHT)

RATCHET IS IN PRISON FOR A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT, CLANK'S NOW TAKEN THE LEAD;
IS RATCHET DOOMED? THE RATCHET AND CLANK FRANCHISE IS BACK,
BUT WITH A SPY THEMED TWIST. PACKING A DEVASTATING SELECTION OF NEW WEAPONS AND GADGETS,
AND DRESSED TO IMPRESS. WILL CLANK RISE TO THE OCCASION TO SAVE HIS FRIEND?



playstation.com.au





inside everyone there's a SingStar

Whether you hog the mic or sing with your mates, get the party started with 30 of the biggest feel good party tracks from Rihanna, David Bowie, Lou Bega, Operator Please, Evermore, Thirsty Merc and much more.

More SingStar fun also available on PLAYSTATION®3

PG

Mild sexual
references,
Mild drug
references

singstar

singstargame.com

PlayStation® 2

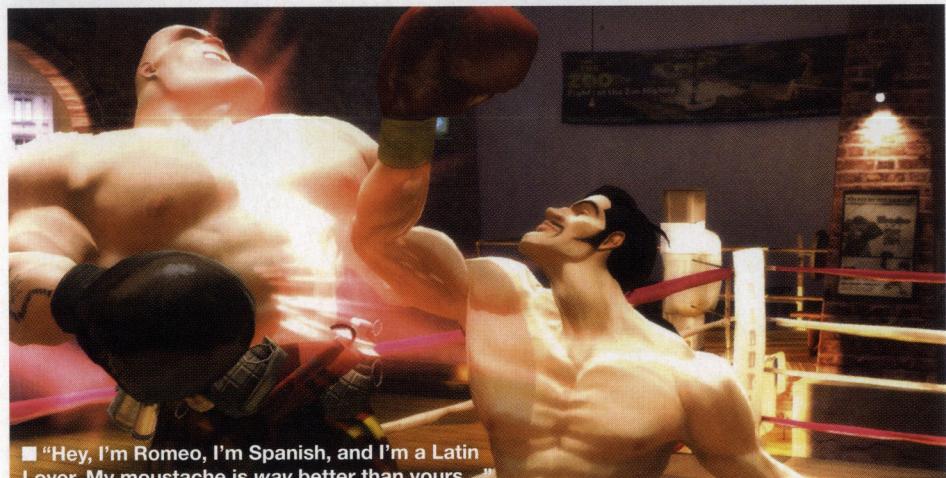


PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: SPORTS
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ RELEASE: LATE 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA
■ DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
■ WEB: www.electronicarts.com.au



■ "BO! I is from da UK, guvnah. I eat fish and chips, drink tea and I *love* the Queen."



■ "Hey, I'm Romeo, I'm Spanish, and I'm a Latin Lover. My moustache is way better than yours..."

INFO BYTE

Keep an eye out for EA taking the piss out of itself with the "Need for Skeet" skeet ball game.



FACEBREAKER

It's a knockout!

With so many developers out there leaning towards creating the most realistic and immersive experience (regardless of genre) the good old fashioned arcade games are few and far between. Ruling the roost of boxing sims with the spectacular *Fight Night* series, (*Prizefighter* was knocked down for a quick count) there really hasn't been all that much competition. By bucking the trend, EA have taken it back to the old

school with a spiritual successor (of sorts) to the classic boxing farce *Super Punch Out!* and are ready to assault the lighter side of boxing with *Facebreaker*. Strap them hands, grab your jump rope and hit the heavy bag as we give you a blow by blow account of this boisterous little bit of boxing brilliance.

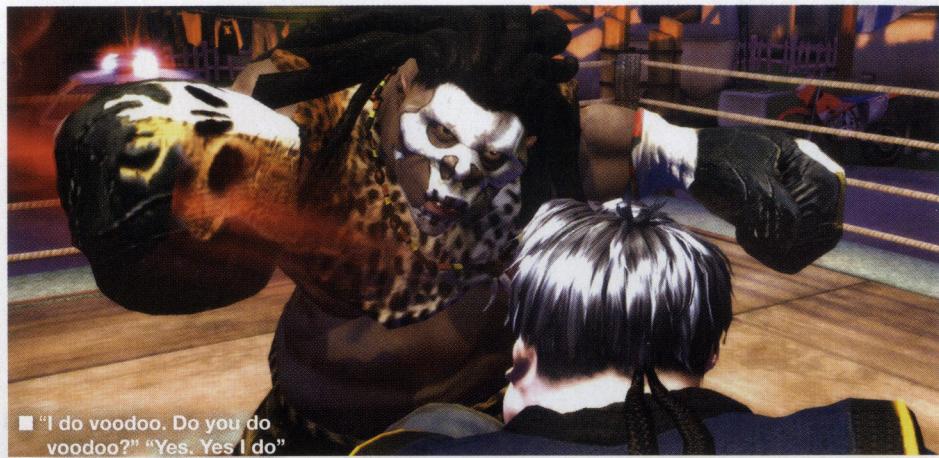
MAMA SAID KNOCK YOU OUT!

Lets start off by stating one all important

thing about *Facebreaker*. It's fun. Damn fun. In fact, we could barely let the controller go after each round. Right off the bat there's a half dozen or so boxers at your disposal.

Each has a very different style and look. Ahhh...the look. They crossed the t's and dotted the lower case j's in every single bit of ethnic stereotyping. There's Ice, the white haired tough as nails brother built like a brick shithouse.

Like 'em big and stupid? Try the massive Molotov, an ex-demolitions expert from Russia. Prepare to swoon at the sensual stylings of Romeo the Latin lover. Prefer a little view askew? Give Kuriko, the pink wacky Goth Japanese cutie a go. For the Rastafarians there's the Dreadlocked reefer smoking (we assume) Jamaican, Kekoa. What about rough chicks? Sparrow is a hard as hell leather clad vixen, and for those party animals out



there, groove to Spin, the DJ from da UK who spins the wheels of steel whilst dishing out the pain, orright then geezer! And that's just half the roster! Each is a ridiculously embellished caricature with unique fighting styles and taunts.

NO ROPE-A-DOPE HERE

The moves are incredibly simple but effective, and the gameplay is irresistible. Combinations of **X** and **Ⓐ** give you high and low punches, **Ⓑ** is for throws (it's not the most traditional style of boxing) and **Ⓐ** brings on a world of hurt, releasing a punch known as a Haybreaker. These are punctuated with an almighty thud delivered with each blow. If you string a combo together with finishing move it's called a Bonebreaker. These manoeuvres end with you pitching your opponent into the air with the sheer force of your blows. This is where the fun amped up significantly.

We were playing as Spin when we first landed a Bonebreaker. While Romeo was midair, an on screen prompt flashed

screaming, "hit him again!!". Who are we to argue? We watched in near disbelief as Spin dropped into the splits beneath Romeo and planted another sucker punch right on his chin, putting him down for the count. This bone-crunching brutality is known as a Groundbreaker, and is as fun as jumping between the sheets with Megan Fox and Scarlett Johansson, and as addictive as Krispy Kreme donuts stuffed with crack.

But it's not all about the offence, either. Some boxers are defensive experts and wait for you to strike first, and then pummel you into the canvas. This is where blocking and parrying comes into play. **▢** keeps a block going constantly (as with most beat 'em ups), but if you pre-empt your adversaries punches by pressing **▢** and either a high or a low shot, you'll parry their feeble attempts and smash their face in retaliation with a punishing hook. This gives a new tactical dimension to each bout, and it's extremely satisfying when you pull it off successfully. Another neat little touch is

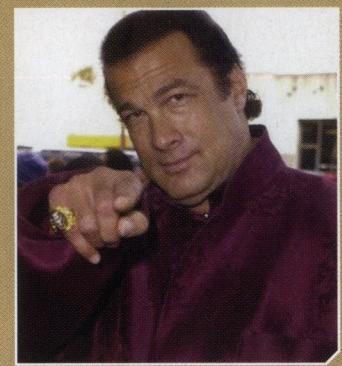
the exclusion of traditional knockdowns. Sure you can smash 'em down to the canvas, but there's no ten count. It's simply three knockdowns and you lose. Between rounds your battered face shows the damage taken, with your character starting to bruise up, doubled over gasping for air, or even groggily wavering around their corner, dependant on how much your opponents wailed on your sorry arse.

SHOW US YA RING... GIRLS

Delicately balancing out this testosterone infused battle for supremacy are the sexy and sensual ring girls. It's great to see the malarkey follows all the way through to these sultry, and stupid sex kittens. Between rounds you are graced with the most tantalising and gratuitous of cleavage and butt shots, with the camera unashamedly zooming in to accentuate and highlight every inch of their... err... assets. These hotties are as dumb as a post, holding the round cards upside down, stumbling over their own feet and

FACE... OFF

A great little feature that has been a staple of many EA releases is the old 'import your own face' into the game business. By simply downloading a picture or importing it via USB you can play as an arcade version of yourself (we're getting our Steven Seagal pics ready) and beat the living snot out of anyone you'd like. What we really like to do is import pictures of celebrity tools, and wail on their sorry asses. Top of our list is Kyle Sandilands, anyone from Big Brother, Tom Cruise and Dr Phil.



giggling incessantly at every single given opportunity.

After spending so much time in heart-stopping life or death struggles, sneaking past Gekko, or roaming through Liberty City, it's a great change of pace to play something that doesn't take itself too seriously, has a great sense of humour about it, and to be honest, is just puerile, flat out fun. We're eager to take another shot at this title and see if it has the makings of a true champion, or is merely a contender... **▲ Dave Kozicki**

BOTTOM LINE

- Fun, fun, fun!
- Mmm... ring girls
- No Aussie characters

OPS IS...

Super psyched



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

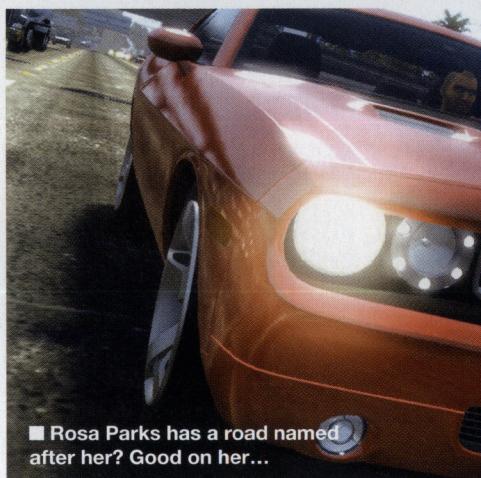
■ GENRE: RACING
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBA
■ RELEASE: LATE 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
■ DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR
■ WEB: www.rockstargames.com

INFO BYTE

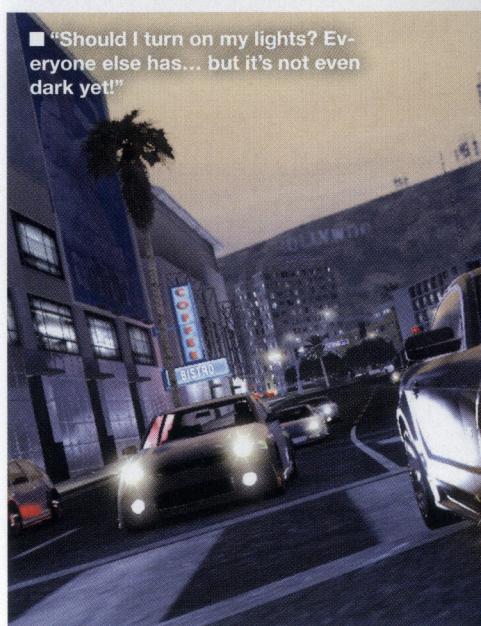
The police are in this game, as an actual dynamic distraction. They will chase after you if you happen to breaking any sort of law...



■ No! It's all wrong! I asked for PINK. Everything PINK!



■ Rosa Parks has a road named after her? Good on her...



■ "Should I turn on my lights? Everyone else has... but it's not even dark yet!"

MIDNIGHT CLUB LOS ANGELES

Join the club

Floating under the radar, plenty of awesome bands do it; awesome actors, or directors. Without much fuss or fanfare they do their thing, and before you know it they've sold a million records in one week, and have the kind of fanbase most flavour of the month bands would rape their Granny for.

Games are less prone to that affect, being that they're more typically a one off purchase and come encapsulated within their own hype, but the *Midnight Club* series is a rare and perfect example of this slow build in action. Rockstar's second most successful franchise, the series has quietly managed to sell over 12 million copies worldwide.

With *Need for Speed*'s last change of direction failing to set the hay on fire, and *Juiced 2* being, well... kinda average, you get the impression that with *Midnight Club*

Los Angeles, Rockstar have realised that this is their time to shine in the lucrative street racing sub genre. If that's the case, then the developer seems to be grasping this opportunity with both hands. Make no mistake – at this stage *Midnight Club* is looking rather spiffy.

START YOUR ENGINE

MCLA is built around the same Rage engine used in *GTA IV*, which resulted in us being pleasantly surprised when the game was first booted up. *GTA IV*, for all its eternal might and splendour, arguably made some slight visual sacrifices and suffered from sub 30 fps gameplay at times – all big no-nos when it comes to racing games. All those concerns, however, dissipated when we first laid our peepers on *MCLA*.

In short, the game looks pretty

fantastic, with a hyper saturated art style that is the exact polar opposite of the decaying Liberty City. Rockstar have done a fantastic job of creating a concise replication of Los Angeles – mainly by taking out all the boring suburban bits, and squishing all the parts you recognise together into one well-designed map.

But what makes *Midnight Club Los Angeles* different from any other street racers is its basic design, and commitment to providing constantly evolving challenges within the game world. Example? Races are constantly changing on the fly, start points are activated by flashing your lights at cars, that just so happen to be moving around the map of their own accord – which means that there are a number of challenges that will have different start and end points depending on where and



when you begin said challenge.

It's all seamlessly integrated, and constantly keeps you in a race situation. During one of the earlier races we tried, we were invited to race to the start point of the actual race, and on another occasion, after getting our arse spanked by a competitor, he asked if we wanted to redeem ourselves on a race back to the start point. It's almost as if Rockstar want to completely eliminate the down time that frequently bog down open world games – there's rarely a moment when you aren't drenched in your own adrenaline, racing furiously to the finish.

LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION

But in spite of the large scale leaps forward that *Midnight Club* has made, it was the in-depth intricacies of the in-game camera that impressed us most. The new action camera in particular featured some innovations that have the potential to positively accentuate the high octane gameplay.

Whereas GTA's cinematic camera was essentially a cosmetic touch, and not really functional for regular gameplay, *MCLA*'s action cam is subtle enough to enhance the experience without obstructing it. Charging into a nitrus boost, players have the trademark speed lines ala *Burnout*, but in addition the game camera zooms in closer, increasing

THE GARAGE



We were lucky enough to get a gander at the all new garage section of *Midnight Club*, the area where all the adjustments and tweaks you'd traditionally expect from a racer are undertaken. Turns out that *MCLA* gives players the opportunity to modify almost every aspect of the car, from the interior to the tires to, well, pretty much anything you can think of. Trust us – you'll be impressed.

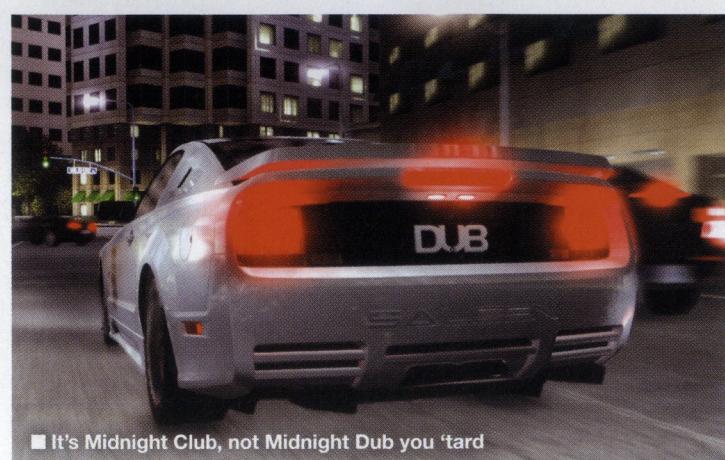
the impression of speed. A similar effect occurs when you slam the handbrake into a drift, the camera heightens the sense of drifting, in a way that really immerses you into the *Midnight Club* experience. Other driving games have experimented in similar ways, but none quite as seamlessly as *MCLA*.

In fact, seamless is probably the best way to describe the entire *Midnight Club* experience, and this is also reflected in the mission system. Whereas even the most open ended games usually force players to 'win' or 'complete' a mission to continue, *MCLA* actually allows you to lose races and progress (albeit more slowly) through the single player campaign. The aim of the game is to collect money and gain rep, and even if you lose races, gains

are made in both these areas, without a break in gameplay.

And this is just the beginning. *Midnight Club* will feature 24 hour day/night cycles, a plethora of different race types, and a (here comes that word again) seamlessly integrated online mode that Rockstar aren't quite ready to talk about at this stage, but we're sure to get details on in the very near future.

While the *Midnight Club* franchise has always seemed content to float under the radar, in the shadow of both *GTA* and other games in its genre, you get a real sense that *MCLA* won't settle for anything other than top spot this time round – if what we've seen so far is anything to go by, it may just achieve those lofty ambitions. ■ **Mark Serrels**



■ It's *Midnight Club*, not *Midnight Dub* you 'tard

■ Clean pants: you should have packed some...

BOTTOM LINE

- Slick seamless gameplay
- Gorgeous game world
- Twitchy steering

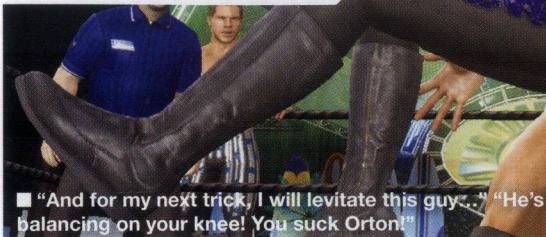
OPS IS...

Clubbin'



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: FIGHTER
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBA
■ RELEASE: LATE 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
■ DEVELOPER: YUKE'S
■ WEB: www.smackdownvsraw.com



■ "And for my next trick, I will levitate this guy..." "He's balancing on your knee! You suck Orton!"

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2009

Still the undisputed champ?

This just in – people who don't like wrestling are stupid. Such people fall into one of two camps. The first is typified by an ignoramus in your own family, possibly a parent or spouse, who will constantly barrage you with phrases like "why are you watching this crap, you know it's fake". That's idiot type one, but type two is a more sinister beast: those that watch at an insidious ironic distance – "ooh, look at the big muscle man fall" they'll guffaw with glee, "look at how ridiculous the whole charade is" they'll exclaim. We hate those guys...

But thankfully, the *Smackdown vs. Raw* franchise isn't made for such elitist buffoons, it's made for those that love wrestling: those that know the comingings and goings of the latest draft, those that watch religiously week in week out.

Fans like those, the absolute hardcore, will probably find themselves satisfied with *WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2009*, others however, may want to hold back a while, because there seems to

be little distinguishing this game from its predecessors.

Well, there are some differences – an updated roster of course – but this time round the game seems to focus on refining the tag team elements of the game. Tag partners, for example, can now slap the back of their partner when unawares for the blind tag.

The other major update is the 'create a finisher', but we found this feature a little underwhelming. The promise of over 500 animations to choose from is enticing, but in reality create-a-finisher merely allows you to combine a multitude of other moves together into one move.

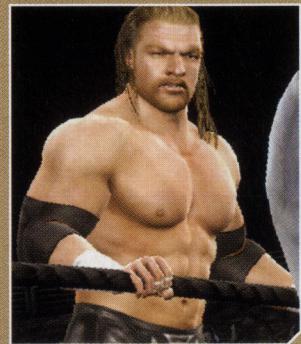
And then there's the presentation issue. With *TNA! iMPACT* gathering hype, *Smackdown vs. Raw* is looking a little rough in comparison. Wrestling games are traditionally focused on a small area of gameplay, so in many ways we were expecting a little more from the character models, or at least an attempt to push the hardware by shooting for 60 fps. *TNA!*

iMPACT has made leaps forward in this area, while *Smackdown* basically hasn't.

SD vs. Raw will inevitably sell a tonne regardless, but we can't help but find parallels between this franchise and *Tony Hawk's* last year. Both were complacent in the face of a new challenger, and just as *Tony Hawk's* suffered a crushing blow at the hands of *SKATE*, we have a bad feeling that *TNA iMPACT* may inflict a beating of similar proportions upon *Smackdown*. We're hoping for the best, but fearing the worst. □ **Mark Serrels**

COVER STAR

In order to reflect the updates to the tag team section in *Smackdown vs. Raw*, the new cover art has the recently revived (then subsequently canned) DX on the cover, meaning that both HHH and Shawn Michaels are simultaneously gracing the cover. Believe it or not, it's actually the first time that HBK has been on the cover of a videogame, but it's HHH's fifth time. Man, he must be sleeping with the boss's daughter or something... (WHAMMY!)

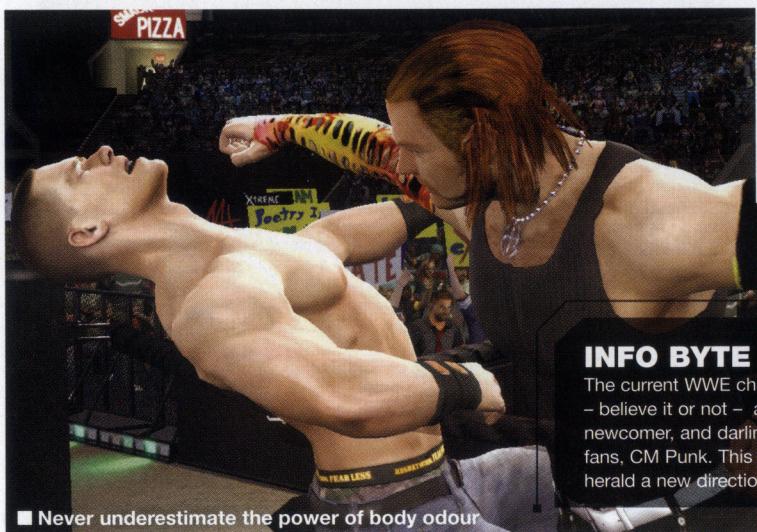


BOTTOM LINE

- Up to date roster
- Poor presentation
- Very little change

OPS IS...

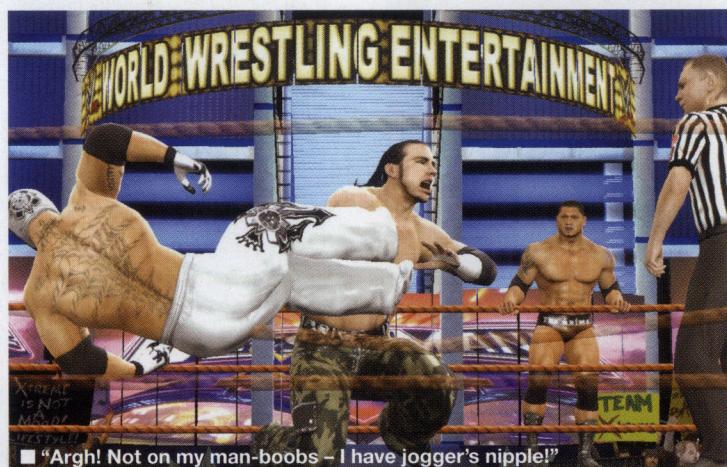
Saying their prayers



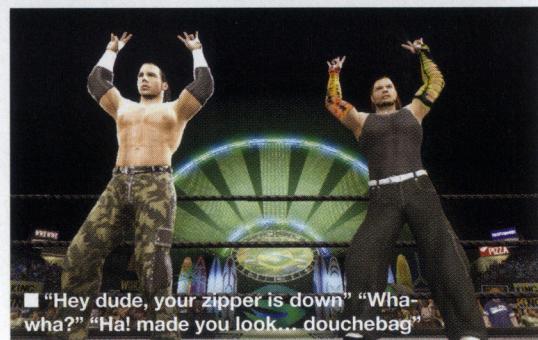
■ Never underestimate the power of body odour

INFO BYTE

The current WWE champion is – believe it or not – a relative newcomer, and darling of the indie fans, CM Punk. This could possibly herald a new direction for the WWE...



■ "Argh! Not on my man-boobs – I have jogger's nipple!"



■ "Hey dude, your zipper is down" "Wha-wha?" "Ha! made you look... douchebag"

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PG

Mild violence

PlayStation® Portable



BuzzTheGame.com

FEATURE

Top 25 PS3 games

THE 25 BEST PS3 GAMES (SO FAR...)

Best of game lists – you know you love them. Just admit it. It's a chance to look back at the games you loved, a chance to spit out your coffee in abject disgust, a chance to reminisce. After reading this list we guarantee you'll be looking through your collection

for some of these classics.

As with all lists of this kind, there'll be rankings you agree with, rankings you don't, and the odd placement that may just cause an aneurism, but remember that it's all in the name of debate. Also bear in mind that some games age better

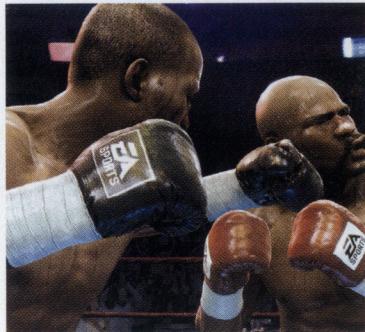
than others – yes, we know that we gave *SKATE* a nine and *Resistance* a 10 – but time and distance gives us a different perspective, and you'll see that reflected in this list.

Alrighty. Let's get started...



25. SINGSTAR

WHY Not necessarily the kind of game you'll be 'playing' on your own – but the next gen iteration of *SingStar* is slick, sexy, and seamlessly presented. Get a bunch of friends over, get them well lubricated and it's on like Donkey Kong. Secretly, you know you love it...



24. FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

WHY Probably the first next gen sports game that truly felt next gen. And that's not to mention the fact that the game looked absolutely incredible. The best boxing sim by far...

In a word... knockout



23. HEAVENLY SWORD

WHY We sense it's a game that won't date well (*God of War 3* will quite possibly obliterate it) but the scale of *Heavenly Sword* was hella impressive – plus it's almost peerless in terms of voice acting.

In a word... heavenly



22. BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

WHY The single player game undoubtedly has its flaws, with spawn points and AI threatening to ruin the experience, but for the multiplayer alone, *Battlefield: Bad Company* makes the list.

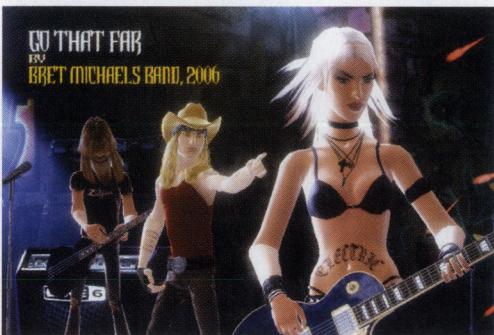
In a word... destructive



21. SUPERSTARDUST HD

WHY Before the one-two punch of *Everyday Shooter* and *Pixel Junk Monsters*, *SuperStardust HD* was the undisputed cream of the PSN crop. With incredible shooting mechanics, it still stands tall today – many in the office still play this game *daily*. The recent addition of the PSN Trophies has also added yet another reason to go back and have one more blast at this classic.

In a word... sparkly



18. GUITAR HERO 3

WHY *Guitar Hero 3* initially had a lot going against it (namely the dodgy Battle Mode) but filled the huge gap left by *Rock Band* with gusto. The tracklist is fantastic, with some of the best rock songs in history making an appearance, and the game's intense difficulty level is pure fan service. If you can finish 'Through the Fire and the Flames' on expert, we salute you...

In a word... rockin'



15. THE ORANGE BOX

WHY May actually have placed higher if it wasn't for the fact that the PS3 port of *The Orange Box* was a bit of a hack job, complete with bugs and frame rate issues. That being said, the value in this package is stellar – and *Portal* is worth the price of entry alone. *Team Fortress 2* is an innovative online shooter, and *Half Life 2*? Complete with both episodes? Truly Epic.

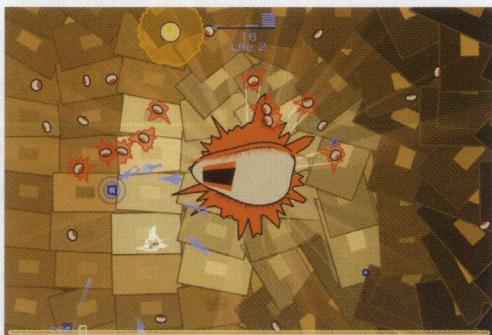
In a word... value



20. RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE

WHY In an admittedly uncrowded genre, *R&C* still remains the best of its kind. Insomniac are one of the most consistent developers in the business, and by no means does this stellar title soil that hard-earned rep. Smooth, sharp, and vibrant, it remains a joy to play.

In a word... futuresex



17. RIFF: EVERYDAY SHOOTER

WHY Sure, it's another stick shooter, but the retina-searing art style, and the subtle integration of music pushes this game to the next level. Add to this recipe the brilliant high concept – the game plays like an interactive *Pink Floyd* album – and you have a true minor classic.

In a word... whoa



14. RACE DRIVER: GRID

WHY With V8s being given the old heave-ho, we totally didn't want to like *Race Driver: GRID* – turns out we had no choice in the matter. Until *Gran Turismo 5*, and possibly afterwards, this is the best pack racing game on the market. Undoubtedly one of the best in the business, but, please... do us a favour – get V8 back on board next time chaps.

In a word... vroom!



19. NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

WHY Probably the only game that has the power to make you feel like a genuine, slicin' dicin' ninja. It might only be a remake of a last-gen game, but we've yet to a see a game outperform it in terms of precise, skill-based action. There's a brilliantly designed precision about *Sigma* that elevates it above the competition. It remains one of the few games this gen to hit a consistent 60fps.

In a word... HAIYAI!!



16. DEVIL MAY CRY 4

WHY A disappointment for many, *Devil May Cry 4* was a bare minimum evolution of its last-gen iterations, but that didn't stop the game from being one of the best action slashers around. With some epic boss battles, and a buttery smooth frame rate, *Devil May Cry 4* is as slick as they come. If we weren't forced to fight some of the bosses three times, this may have been higher...

In a word... EMOTional

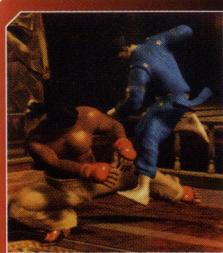


13. WARHAWK

WHY This was just one of those games that ground production of OPS to an absolute halt when first released. Attempting to provide so many combat options whilst retaining balance is an almost impossible task, yet *Warhawk* made it seem like child's play. In many ways it's a criminally underplayed game. One of the best multiplayer experiences on the market, hands down.

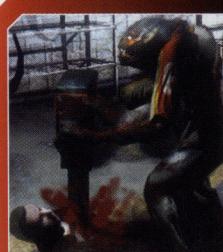
In a word... timesuck

WHERE THE HELL IS...



VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

In many ways this is the best fighter on the PS3, but a lack of online play was real deal breaker...



THE DARKNESS

We loved this shooter when it first came out, but the base shooting mechanics were a bit off...



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

An extremely disappointing effort – desperately needs to evolve...



12. RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

WHY The launch title for the PS3, and by far the best FPS on the PS3 for a very long time. Insomniac took their vibrant imagination, and knack for creating batshit insane guns, to the next level with this game. While *Resistance* now looks dated in many ways, it retains a strong online following to this day.

In a word... irresistible



10. MOTORSTORM

WHY Has it held up? Has it been surpassed? As of now we say... not yet. While it will undoubtedly be surpassed by its sequel, and the impressive looking *Pure*, for now *Motorstorm* is the best racer of its type. It still looks fantastic, and remains the best pick up and play racer on the market. Ooh baby – that mud. Feels so good.

In a word... dirty



8. ASSASSIN'S CREED

WHY Well, we loved it (along with a bunch of other like minded people) but in hindsight, we might have gone just a *little* overboard in our praise of this title. Still, in our minds *Assassin's Creed* remains one of the first games on the PS3 to provide a truly unique next gen gaming experience.

In a word... contentious



11. BURNOUT PARADISE

WHY One of the more contentious choices on the list – plenty thought it should be higher. Why the controversy? Well despite the fact that the game is a technical marvel there were a fair few design choices that frustrated many. In the end, however, we chose to judge *Burnout Paradise* on the many things it did *right* (almost everything).

In a word... paradise



9. ELDER SCRROLLS IV: OBLIVION

WHY *Oblivion* remains the greatest RPG on the PS3. The sheer scale of the environments, coupled with the endless side quests, makes *Oblivion* one of the best games on the PS3 period.

In a word... enormous

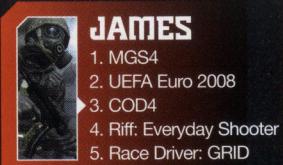
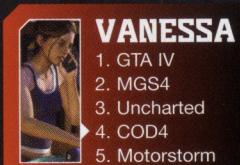


7. PIXEL JUNK MONSTERS

WHY *PixelJunk Monsters* is the perfect example of what a PSN game should be. The final levels are tougher than Margaret Thatcher's leathery old arse, but you never get too frustrated because the end is always within your terse grasp. That's why *PJM* is so compulsive... that's why it will own your life.

In a word... monstrous

OUR TOP 5s



TOP 5... BIGGEST LET DOWNS



1. HAZE

What the hell happened?



2. FEAR

720p my arse...



3. PRO EVO 08

Frame rate issues – WTF?



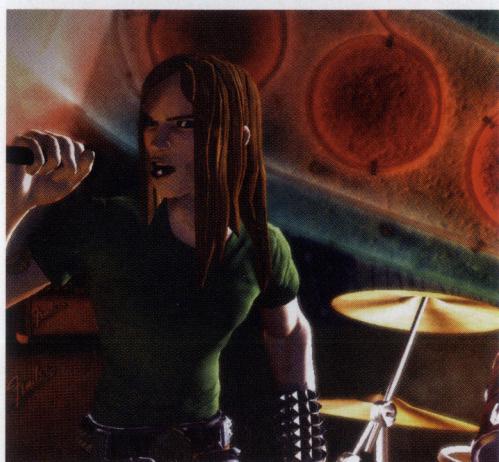
4. SONIC

Beastiality – not cool.



5. LAIR

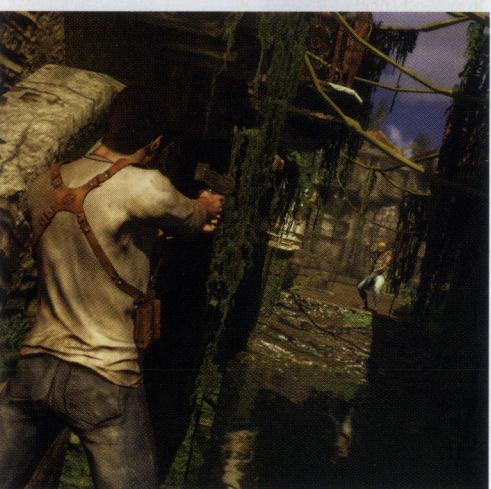
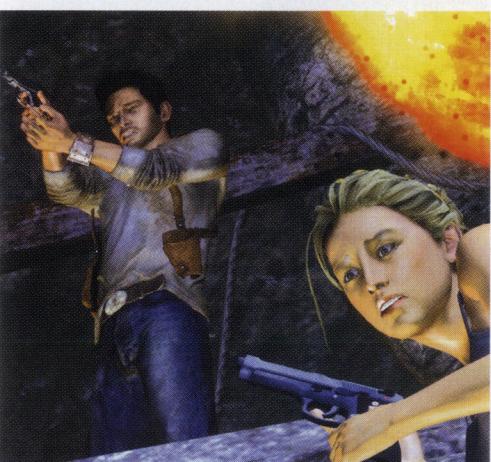
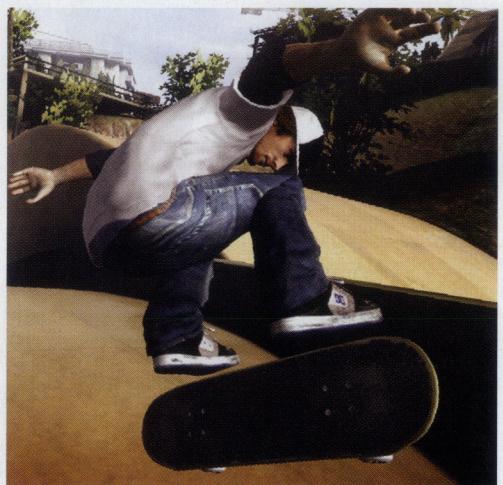
SUXAIXIS...



5. SKATE

WHY In an era of huge budgets, PR hype, and constant disappointment, it's always a big (admittedly welcome) surprise when a game comes out of nowhere to redefine what we expect from our hobby of choice. *SKATE* was one of those games. There was no real reason to get hyped about *SKATE* beforehand – just another sports game from EA, essentially. But once we got to grips with the unique control system, it felt like absolute blasphemy to play any other way. *SKATE* was just seamless, a revolution in control that immediately rendered the *Tony Hawk's* franchise irrelevant. We gave this game a solid 9 upon its release, but in hindsight we possibly could have scored it higher. The game has dated fantastically well, and almost everyone in the office continues to fire up *SKATE* for a quick hour to this day. *SKATE* has become the new standard by which all sports games must be judged. A stone cold classic.

In a word... tubular



4. UNCHARTED

WHY This little adventure kinda snuck up on everyone and blew us out the water! It's Indiana Jones meets Bruce Campbell as our hero fights his way through wave after wave of mercenaries to find a mysterious treasure. This baby has it all. A brilliant cover system, smart and determined AI which took perverse pleasure in out-flanking you, gripping vehicle sections (you haven't lived till you've done a drive by on the back of a jet-ski), perfecto controls and some of the most dead sexy graphics we've ever seen. The play is intelligently balanced between tense fire-fights (the effects of grenades are exceptionally presented complete with ringing in the ears!), fun and frantic jeep and jet-ski chases, and the usual frustrating platforming and puzzle solving. This is easily one of the most enjoyable experiences we've had in a long time and a feather in the cap for SONY.

In a word... rollicking



6. ROCK BAND

WHY Yep. This game isn't even out in Australia yet – which is almost unforgivable at this stage – but *Rock Band* is undoubtedly the best party game ever created, and that fact is difficult to ignore. Alone, *Rock Band* is a solid experience, but get four of you headbanging in unison to 'More than a Feeling' and you may just partake in the world's first simultaneous multiple orgasm. It is that much fun. Yeah the drums are a bit noisy, and the guitars have their issues, but the experience is second to none. The main question mark is with regards to whether or not *Rock Band* can fortify itself against the inevitable siege of *Guitar Hero World Tour*, especially if it manages to release here before *Rock Band*. At this stage, that is a possibility. That being said, as of right now, *Rock Band* is the game that gets the party started, in a very big way. If you've been lucky/rich enough to import a copy, then you're in for the time of your life.

In a word... orgasmic

MISSING IN ACTION



1. ROCK BAND

No excuses – where is it? We wants it...



2. INDIANA JONES

It's been aaaages...



3. HOME

Get a move on Sony!



4. AFRIKA

What is it... where is it?



5. FF XIII

It's about time...

3. CALL OF DUTY 4

WHY In many people's mind the game of 2007, and one of the best first person shooters ever conceived, *Call of Duty 4* was another game that surprised us – in a good way. First off the single player – you could make the claim that the single player experience was a little linear, but our response to that is simple: who gives a rat's arse. The campaign may have been dominated by set pieces, but the set pieces in question were so spectacular that you basically don't give a crap, because they were part of one of the most efficiently told stories this generation. Regardless of the single player experience, there's always the stellar multiplayer and *Call of Duty 4* remains, to this day, the most played online console game – even outshooting Microsoft's flagship *Halo 3* on the 360. Technically, *COD4* is an absolute marvel, running at 60 frames per second when most can't even lock in a solid 30. *Call of Duty 4* has set a benchmark that few can follow. Absolutely exhilarating.

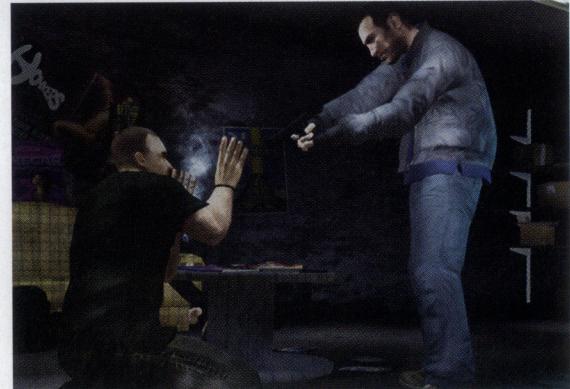
In a word... incredible



2. GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

WHY Oh boy. How do we explain this – have we ever done a list where Grand Theft Auto didn't top the list? Probably not. This was easily the toughest choice to make in this list – ask us again in a couple of months time and the answer might be totally different. As we worked down towards the top spot the *MGS* vs *GTA* elephant in the room slowly became apparent to everyone – in the end it came down to a simple vote, and it was tighter than a duck's arse. Two chose *Metal Gear Solid 4*, Two chose *Grand Theft Auto IV*, and Dave chose... *Warhawk*. When pushed however, he chose *MGS* over *GTA* and the deed was done. In no way, however, is this a slight on *GTA IV*, in fact it's the complete opposite. If anything it's testament to the amazing quality of this game that we've spent so much time explaining why it isn't number one. An incredible achievement.

In a word... masterpiece



GAMES WE WANT...



1. GOD OF WAR III

Never disappoints...



2. RESIDENT EVIL 5

Come on, come on, come on!



3. LITTLEBIG PLANET

Could be magical?



4. MOTORSTORM: PACIFIC RIFT

In the jungle, the mighty jungle!



5. RESISTANCE 2

Pushing the boundaries....



PlayStation® 2



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inside everyone there's a SingStar

Classic Rocker? Forever Indie-Kid? This one is for all those SingStars about to rock! Start your tour with 30 amplified tracks from Faith No More, Silverchair, Regurgitator, Faker, Spiderbait, Judas Priest, Fall Out Boy and much more.

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and Violence.

singstar

singstargame.com





1 METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

WHY It was a tough decision, and not everyone in the office agrees, but as of right now we believe that the best game on the PlayStation 3 is *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Maybe it's that new car smell, maybe it's totally irrational, but we just feel *MGS4* is completely peerless. In terms of refined gameplay, in terms of a next gen experience, in terms of presentation, *Guns of the Patriots* is a game that comes up trumps.

It's not perfect – Kojima clearly needs an editor with balls next time, and this is painfully evident towards the end of act 5 – but those that criticise *MGS4* for being a game that's watched instead of played clearly don't realise exactly why it's such a refined, balanced game. The dense, self-indulgent, multi-layered story is there if you want it – but even if you don't there is an endlessly replayable campaign that positively guarantees a different experience every time you play it. The detail packed into *Guns of the Patriots* is astounding, and it's reflected in every single second you spend with the game.

MGS4 is a game you can constantly experiment with. Every time you try a new approach the game's AI responds exactly as it should. This combined with a brilliantly conceived control system, results in one of the most in-depth experiences ever.

It may date horribly, time may prove us wrong on this one, but as of right now, for our money, *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* is the best game on the PlayStation 3. We're off to start on our umpteenth playthrough – have fun.

In a word... peerless

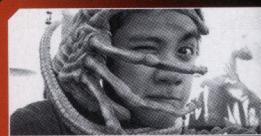


MGS OVER GTA? YAY OR NAY?



MARK

Personally I had more fun playing *MGS4*, and personally I think it's the better game, but I also think *GTA IV* is a better achievement technically. I've played through *GTA IV* twice, and *MGS4* thrice, put in 60 hours with both and at this stage I'm more likely to put *MGS4* in my PS3 – so yes. We got it right.



PHILL

We got it wrong folks. *MGS4* is simply not for everyone – anyone can pick up *GTA IV* and instantly start having fun with the game, but *MGS4* requires an investment of time, players who have no experience of the series would be lost with *Metal Gear Solid 4*, and that's a fundamental flaw in the game. Word.



VANESSA

GTA IV just takes the prize. JUST! I've switched five times already, I love the rasping, dry Snake but when it comes to accessibility, and variety there is only one winner. It's a game that is talked about purely because there is so much to talk about. Everyone struts through in their own way, plus hot dogs!



DAVE

Yeah, we definitely got it right. I don't know what it was, but *MGS4* took me back to the first time I played the original back in the day. It was crisp, clean, intense and offset by those wacky Kojima moments we all know and love, plus it's sex on legs to look at. Call me nostalgic, but that did it for me.



JAMES

After the final piece of spit was thrown *MGS4* pipped *Grand Theft Auto IV* to take out the numero uno position. While I was blown away by *GTA*'s sprawling world and across-the-board improvements, I felt *MGS4* produced more memorable gaming moments. We chose right.





The issue of an **R18+ rating for videogames** is a testy subject – tempestuous even – but it's also an issue shrouded in misconception. The first misconception, and possibly the most blatant of them all, is that games are for children exclusively – and while this attitude has eroded as of late, it's still an issue that gamers themselves feel the need to hammer home.

The second misconception however is our own – the belief that the OFLC is solely responsible for the lack of an R18+ rating in Australia. Almost every letter we receive regarding this issue blames the OFLC, when in actual fact they only implement the guidelines provided – they have no power with which to change them.

In actual fact the power to change the situation actually lies with the appointed censorship ministers – who at the moment are the Attorney Generals of each State. The most famous of these ministers is undoubtedly Michael

Atkinson, who is against the introduction of an R18+ rating on the grounds that "increasing the amount of inappropriate material available... will just mean even more unsuitable content is on sale", adding that if parents make bad decisions regarding the games their children play now, this will escalate if an R18+ rating is introduced.

It's a fair argument, as many parents are uneducated with regards to ratings in games. It's clear that the way forward here is education – many parents clearly don't know what their children are playing, and we as gamers are paying for this ignorance.

The crux of the argument is, regardless of whether we're upset about the fact certain games are restricted to us, the ratings exist to protect children. The bottom line of the argument is this: would the existence of an R18+ rating help keep restricted content out of the hands of kids, or would it become more difficult to control?

It's hard to say. The other issue is that we as adults should be allowed, within reason, to play the videogames the rest of the world is allowed to play. At this point in time we're not allowed to do so, but does our right to play such games override

the need to protect children? Obviously not, but there is no reason why these two necessities can't co-exist. As long as everyone is educated regarding the ratings, and parents understand that certain games are not for children, there's no reason why Australians can't finally get the R18+ rating they deserve.

To help us with this debate we tried to get interviews with both Michael Atkinson and the OFLC, and while we couldn't get a hold of Mr Atkinson in due time, a representative was good enough to spend some time answering some of your questions, sent into us via our forums at www.gameplayer.com.au.



After providing an open invitation to members of our gameplayer forums, we asked the OFLC the questions we received...

Thanks very much for your time, just to begin with could you give us an overview of the process games must go through to gain classification?

From Mark

All computer games, except for exempt computer games, must be classified by the Classification Board before being sold, hired or demonstrated in Australia.

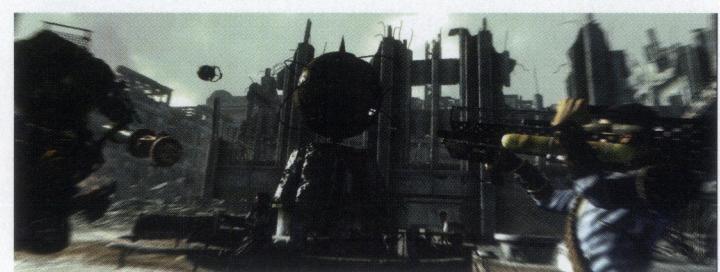
(Exempt computer games are computer games that are of a business, accounting, professional, scientific or educational nature.)

Under the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Act), an application for classification of a computer game must be in writing, made on a form approved by the Director, signed by or on behalf of the applicant, and accompanied by a copy of the game. A prescribed fee and a document setting out details about the game is required if there is material in the game likely to be classified at M or higher.

The Director of the Board may

authorise industry assessors, who undertake the required training course, to recommend the likely classification of a computer game. For computer games likely to be classified G to M, assessors may provide a detailed recommendation report with the application for classification for a reduced fee. The recommendation report assists in the decision-making process of the Board. Computer games likely to be classified MA15+ are classified by a minimum of two Board members. The Board may also request a demonstration of the computer game by the applicant.

The Board will classify a computer



game in the form in which the distributor submits it. The Board does not have the power to direct a distributor to modify a computer game.

In classifying a computer game, the Board applies the Act, the National Classification Code and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games (the Guidelines). These documents are available for download at www.classification.gov.au.

The OFLC has to be representative of the Australian public at large, how do you go about choosing those representatives?

From Phill

The Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP, is responsible for making recommendations to the Governor-General regarding appointments after consulting State and Territory Censorship Ministers.

The Governor-General is to have regard to: '...the desirability of ensuring that the membership of the Board is broadly representative of the Australian community.'

Positions are advertised in the national press and on the websites of the Classification Board and the Attorney-General's Department.

Under the Code, classification decisions are to give effect, as far as possible, to the following principles:

- 1. Adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want;**
- 2. Minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them**

By not allowing an R18+ rating, aren't you violating your own code?

From Joah

The National Classification Scheme is a cooperative arrangement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories. The Code and Guidelines are applied by the Classification Board in deciding what classification category applies to particular material.

Fallout 3 was banned due to explicit drug use - but there have been

"THE BOARD DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO DIRECT A DISTRIBUTER TO MODIFY A COMPUTER GAME"

plenty of games featuring similar imagery. Could you go into detail with regards to why the game was deemed unsuitable for rating, and will you be reviewing a resubmitted version of the game anytime soon?

From James

The Guidelines provide that at the MA15+ classification drug use may be strong in impact and should be justified by context.

The Guidelines also provide a general rule that states material that contains drug use and sexual violence related to incentives or rewards is RC (Refused Classification).

An incentive may be the ability to progress quicker through the game. A reward may be a gain in points or access to a wider choice of weapons.

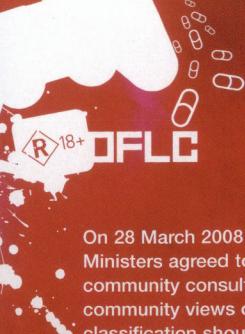
In regard to the computer game *Fallout 3*, the Board is of the opinion that the use of morphine in the game has the positive effect of enabling the character to ignore limb pain. This ability to progress through the game more easily is the incentive to take the drug while the reward is in the character's abilities.

The applicant for the classification of *Fallout 3* may submit a revised version of the game for classification. To date, no such application has been received by the OFLC.

I would like to know why you feel an R18+ rating is not needed. Why do they not want parents to be better informed as to the content of the games their children are playing? Wouldn't an R18+ rating make it easier to keep adult content out of minors' hands?

From Adin





On 28 March 2008 the Censorship Ministers agreed to conduct broad community consultation seeking community views on whether an R18+ classification should be introduced for computer games. The consultation will enable the Government to find out whether parents would be empowered by an R18+ classification, and whether the clear labelling of high level games as R18+ would be a useful tool to assist them in knowing what games minors should not play.

Why as a thirty something year old gamer (yeah) am I being told I only have the same rights as a 15 year old gamer?

From Bagmup

Censorship Ministers have previously agreed that the highest classification for computer games is MA15+ (Mature Accompanied).

How do you remain consistent with ratings - I've seen plenty of games that seemed much worse than the titles the OFLC deems unsuitable.

From Vanessa

Each computer game is classified individually and on its own merits.

Does your own personal opinion ever come into giving ratings, or is there a checklist that is followed?

From Toddski

No, decisions are made in accordance with the Act, the Code and the Guidelines.

Is thinking the OFLC has the power to introduce an R18+ classification for games a false assumption?

Who should we contact if we want change?

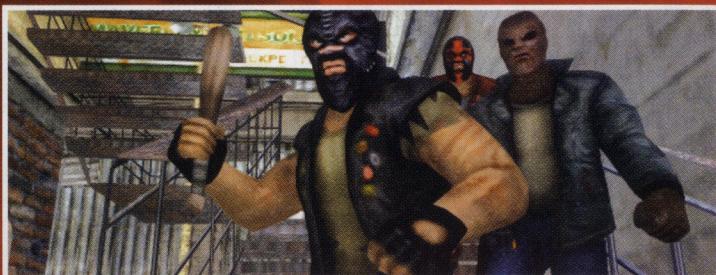
From Haladox

The Classification Board does not have the power to introduce an R18+ classification for computer games. Commonwealth, State and Territory Censorship Ministers agree to classification policy. Currently, the Censorship Minister is the Attorney-General for each State or Territory and the Commonwealth Censorship Minister is the Minister for Home Affairs.

Now that companies have incorporated parental lockouts and censorship control into their newest consoles, on what basis are you denying an R18+ rating for games? If the concern was about minors having easy access to inappropriate material isn't the responsibility now entirely the parents given they now have the option to lock that offensive material out?

From Daza

Any major changes to classification policy must be agreed to by all Commonwealth, State and Territory Censorship Ministers. A discussion paper is being developed and will be released for public consultation. Interested parties can participate in the consultation when it is announced and make a submission. ▶



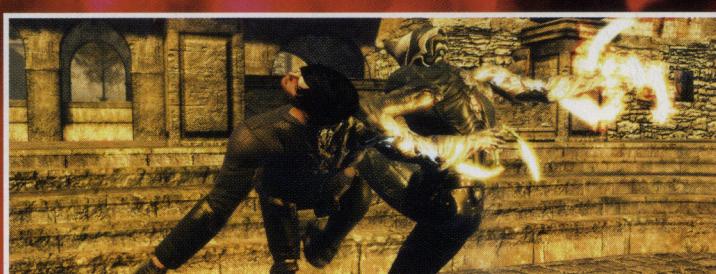
THE DEARLY DEPARTED #1 Manhunt 1 and 2

Although the first *Manhunt* made it past censors for a short while, before getting banned, *Manhunt 2* never even made it past the gate. To be fair, however, it was one of the OFLC's better decisions, since the game was not only stupidly violent, but it was a pretty mediocre game to boot.



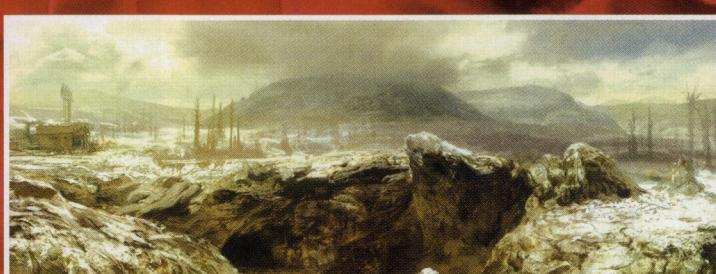
THE DEARLY DEPARTED #2 Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure

Possibly the most ridiculous banning in video game history, *Mark Ecko's only* crime was to be released during a media assault on street graffiti. This game was mostly harmless, but got caught up in something not of its own making. Wasn't that great a game regardless.



THE DEARLY DEPARTED #3 Dark Sector

This one stings a little. The offender in this game was the 'glaive' – a weapon like that cool thing the hero had in that lost classic *Krull*. Said weapon had the power to lop off limbs, heads, and pretty much anything it came into contact with.



THE DEARLY DEPARTED #4 Fallout 3

Undoubtedly the straw that broke the camel's back. Banned for allowing the player to ingest morphine via a needle injection, this game got in trouble for glorifying drug use. There's still a very solid chance that the game will make it to these shores – albeit in an edited form.

ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!

CHECK OUT...

...all this juicy online goodness



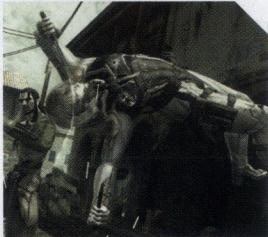
Rainbow Six Vegas 2

Making an absolute mockery of the overpriced COD4 map packs, Ubisoft have decided to give away three new maps for free – yep, absolute zilcho. Sweet deal.



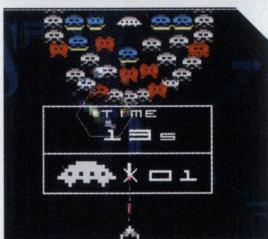
Australian Buzz Pack

Looking to move away from the UK specific questions? Then get this bad boy. Coming in at almost nine bucks for just over 500 questions, this is a tough sell but may be worth it for hardcore fans.



MGS4 Database

This database will help newcomers struggling with the game's labyrinth-like plot, and provide new nuggets of information for those well versed in the mythos of the franchise.



Space Invaders Extreme

Those with a lust for retro gaming revived will dig Space Invaders Extreme in a big way. So why not have a bash at this demo. The PSP is starting to get more involved in this free demo action.



Civilization Revolution

Some may find Civilization boring, but some will love it so much they'll sell their kidneys for it. And if you don't try it, then you'll never know if you are one of those freaks.



Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm

We're all Naruto fans here, but we guarantee that, even if you hate that squeaky orange ninja-in-training, you'll love this sleek sexy playable demo.



2.40!

Brave New World...

So here we are again, sitting down at the old PS3, our itchy trigger fingers poised to strike, when wouldn't you know it, there's a new firmware update to install. Groan! You all know what that means. Depending on your bandwidth, you're up for another dose of long download times (up to 30 minutes). And what do we get for our trouble, beside frustration? After shaking our fists at the sky and screaming "MENDOZA!" we took a look around, and you know what? We started to smile. It looks like our prayers have been answered and we've been blessed with the one feature we've been hoping for.

Wait for it... here it comes... almost there... you can now access the cross media bar (XMB) in game! Just a press of the PS button and you're in. Praise the Lord! It works the exact same way as bringing up the XMB while watching a movie file, and it's about bloody time too. It was the most requested new feature to be added to the firmware. This luxury has been available from the get-go on

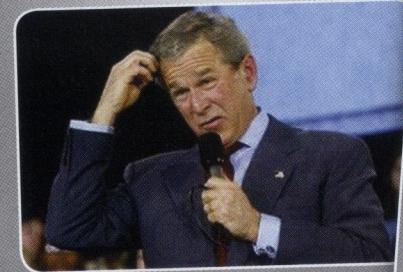
that other console, and we're glad that it's finally made the transition over. No longer must we quit a game to send or view messages, check downloads or open chat lines mid game. Now that's what we're talking about! We've been screaming for an 'access all areas' single-button pass for a donkey's age now (we're not really sure how long that is, but we're guessing it's a bloody long time).

Those of you who get lost in a gaming haze (a stupor, certainly not the game) can rest easy knowing that the time and date are reassuringly nestled in the top right hand corner so you'll always be able to tell your peeps what time it is. You can also get straight onto the internet with a Google search bar. We've also heard a rumour that this version lays the foundation to allow us to listen to our own tunes from the hard drive library, in game! Fingers crossed for that one.

This latest upgrade is a huge step in the right direction. Everything is at your fingertips, twenty-four seven, and that's just the way it should be.

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

Ever get stuck tweaking a setting only to realise that your ("ahem") girlfriend threw the manual to your PS3 out? Don't stress. It's all good. Just go to the Online Instruction Manual and every problem and possible solution are just a press of a button away. (Unless it's a problem with the network, then you're on your own buddy).



YOU'RE THE BEST... AROUND!

Another added little bonus is instant access to your trophies. Now you can check out all the unlockables you've... err... unlocked. Each game has a specific number allotted from bronze, silver, gold and platinum (only available after all others are completed). The platinum ones are the most difficult to get and add the largest boost to your gamer level.

ONLINE REVIEW



SHIKI-TEI

Four seasons in one day...

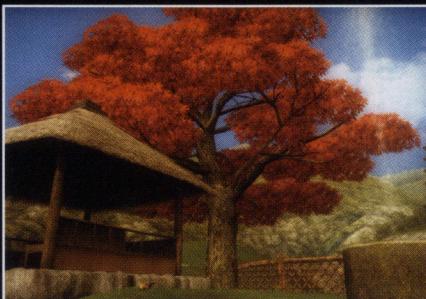
Shiki-tei (which means 'four seasons garden') is centred on the art of cultivating small patches of land, but it's a world away from the fun of the *Harvest Moon* games. We're not sure that we should even refer to *Shiki-tei* as a 'game', because it tries really hard to break into the non-game territory Nintendo has been mining with such success recently – only less successfully, and without any novel control input. The analogue stick controls a cursor, which in turn enables you to position items around your *Shiki-tei* garden; and when you're walking around the garden in first-person mode, the analogue stick is again all that's required.

There is some sense of progression here in that seasons change as your garden grows, and you can add/remove features at any time, but there aren't any real game objectives. Instead, you'll have to make do with just enjoying the prettiness

of the graphics (and *Shiki-tei* is lush and verdant, to be fair), taking photos with a virtual camera, and reading up on more than a hundred varieties of flora in the game's mini encyclopaedia/glossary.

Whether that's enough to make *Shiki-tei* worthy of a 1,500yen download will depend largely on your disposition: if you're happy to design a garden for the sake of virtually spending (real) time there, soaking up the calming ambient soundtrack and pixel-rays of sunlight, this could be a charming piece of software. But for the majority of gamers, who have been brought up on simulations that reward effort in more imaginative and satisfying ways, *Shiki-tei* is underwhelming in spite of the evident care that has gone into its production. You'd be better off relaxing in a real garden, reading this magazine (or playing *Harvest Moon* on your PSP).

★★



LOLGASM



Benny Hill

Benny Hill music could make anything funny – except that new Mike Myers movie *The Love Guru*... shudder. Anyways – the new *Alone in the Dark* game may have sucked big hairy balls, but this video is worth a watch or two. Watch as the main protagonist attempts to break into a car, unsuccessfully...

Watch it at: <http://www.gamevideos.com/video/id/19755>

Or google: Benny Hill Alone in the Dark



Dancing Queen

Men like to watch chicks dance, with furious intensity – that's pretty much why strip clubs were invented. Thankfully Hideo Kojima understands your primal urges, which is why the beauties will dance in the most Japanese fashion whenever you crank out your iPod in *MGS4*. Awesome.

Watch it at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMmlukhDMJo

Or Google: MGS4 Dancing Beauty gameplay



The Office

Too much *MGS* – we know! But this is worth it. Japanese office workers take time out of their busy schedule to partake in a bit of *MGS* style hide and seek. Hi-jinks ensue.

Watch it at: <http://www.gamevideos.com/video/id/13444>

Or Google: MGS2 Office ad

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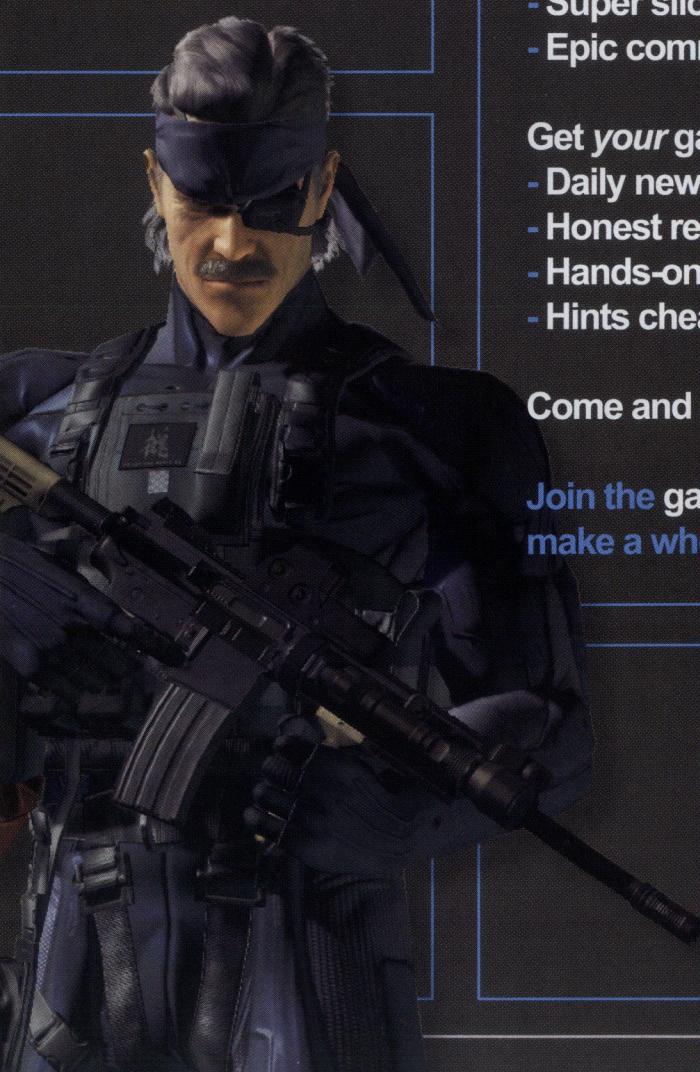
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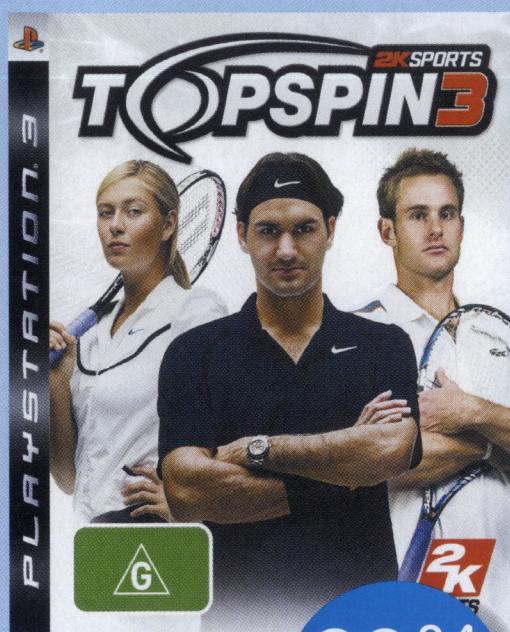
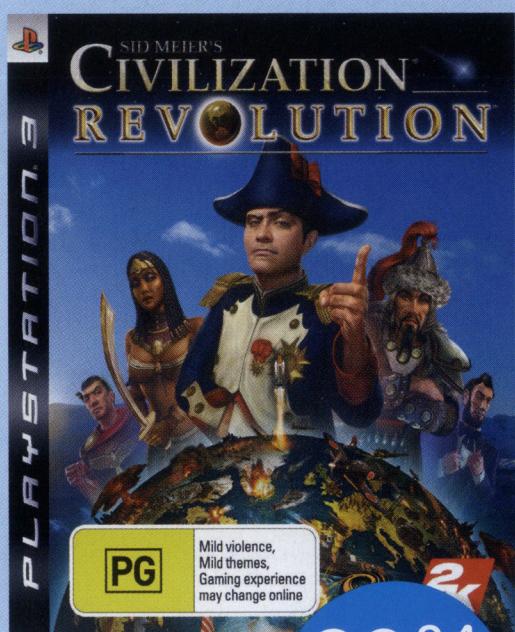
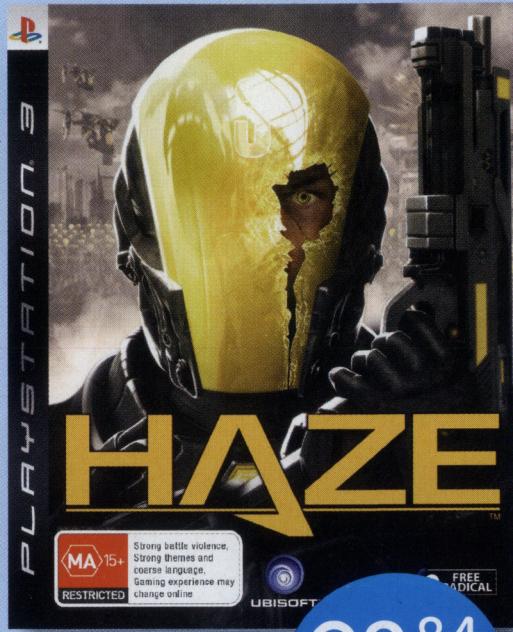
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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

in association with

BIGW

REVIEW RATINGS

01 Reserved for the very worst that developers have to offer.

Essentially, anything that receives this score has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. A game receiving this score could not possibly be any worse, unless it was broken from the outset (or gave you cancer, or killed your dog). A game that should never have even survived its first pitch – as bad as it gets.

02 A terrible, terrible game. There may be one or two

things about this game that work, or aren't actually broken, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the sheer quantity of badness that they basically cease to exist. Maybe it has a clever name, maybe the concept was sound – but virtually every single thing about it is bad beyond belief. Not worth the effort.

03 Very disappointing. A game with this score is

fundamentally flawed in a number of extremely vital ways. There may be one or two things that could've been done somewhat worse than they have been, but for most part it's totally uninspired, boring and unappealing in every way. There are games that are worse, but there's not that many.

04 Poor. There may be parts of this game that are vaguely fun, and it may be robust enough in a few departments, but the overall package is lacking any significant reason to stick it out. Games receiving this score may show initial promise, or sound good at first, but will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail.

05 Mediocre. In the strictest terms, 50%

is a pass – just. Unfortunately, a game receiving this score will have had just as many things go wrong with it as go right, and that really isn't enough to succeed. A game receiving this score will probably be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub-par in others without being outright awful.

06 Decent enough, although still lacking a certain something. A game receiving this score will be sound, but will have some fairly glaring faults and your interest will probably wane pretty quickly. It will have a number of limitations that will probably turn off more than a few gamers, but will get just enough right to keep dedicated fans of the genre ploughing through.

07 Good. A robust, fun game that's well worth a look, although will only rarely amaze. A game receiving this score will have more or less accomplished nearly all it set out to do in a decent fashion, but it will have some noticeable problems that prevent it from being as good as it could be. Nevertheless, they generally won't ruin the overall gaming experience.

08 Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. A combination of some odd issues, minor problems or a lack of innovation may hamper it somewhat, but the overall impression it leaves it very positive. Very entertaining, very satisfying and you wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to others. Well ahead of the pack in most departments.

09 Excellent. Outstanding in almost every way. Some negligible blemishes will just keep it from being held aloft as a true masterpiece, but it is very likely the best in its field. Most elements of this game will be truly remarkable and you'll be hard-pressed to find too many other games of greater quality. An astonishing game that leaves all but the very best behind.

10 Incredible. Everything went right during the creation of this game. A game receiving a perfect 10 does not necessarily mean it is perfect, likely just teasingly close, but to reserve 10s for THE perfect game is pointless. Instead, a 10 represents a game of gobsmacking brilliance, a game that stands high above the rest and a game that you cannot afford to ignore. A masterpiece.

THE OPS AWARDS



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP

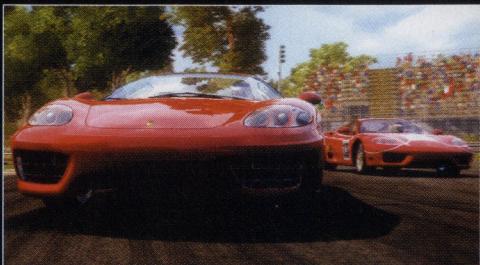


We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

INSIDE...



SOULCALIBUR IV



FERRARI CHALLENGE TROFEO PIRELLI



SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

Vader swings, we duck! – page 74

The fiery Italian dominates the roads – page 84

Zap those buggers to oblivion! – page 87

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: FIGHTING
■ RELEASE: JULY 2008
■ DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$109.95
■ HD: 720p
■ WEB: www.namcobandai.com

■ BACK STORY: *Soul Edge* first appeared in arcades before being retitled *Soul Blade* on the PSOne. Things really took off when it hit the Sega Dreamcast under the title of *Soulcalibur*, however, with suave new visuals that burst eyeballs globally.



■ "You know how you look in the disco when you wear a white shirt – that's how I look ALL THE FRICKIN TIME"

PlayStation[®]
Official Magazine - Australia

BRONZE
AWARD
8/10

SOULCALIBUR IV

Namco Bandai's swashbuckler swings back onto the stage of history

"S" parks flying from blades in battle light the fire in his soul," says Namco Bandai's latest. It's hardly going to win a ribbon for its deft mastery of English, but that's not going to stop dedicated hordes of joystick twiddlers beaming at the sight of this in their trolleys. Like the previous games in the series, *Soulcalibur IV* is a virtual martial art that masquerades as a sugar-and-pop brawler to suck in both hardcore fans and punters. It moves like a neon cougar, plays with the precision of a chamber orchestra, features online play, and deserves top real estate on the bloodied podium. It's also disappointing.

For the uninitiated, *Soulcalibur* is Tekken with pointy bits. Set in a medieval

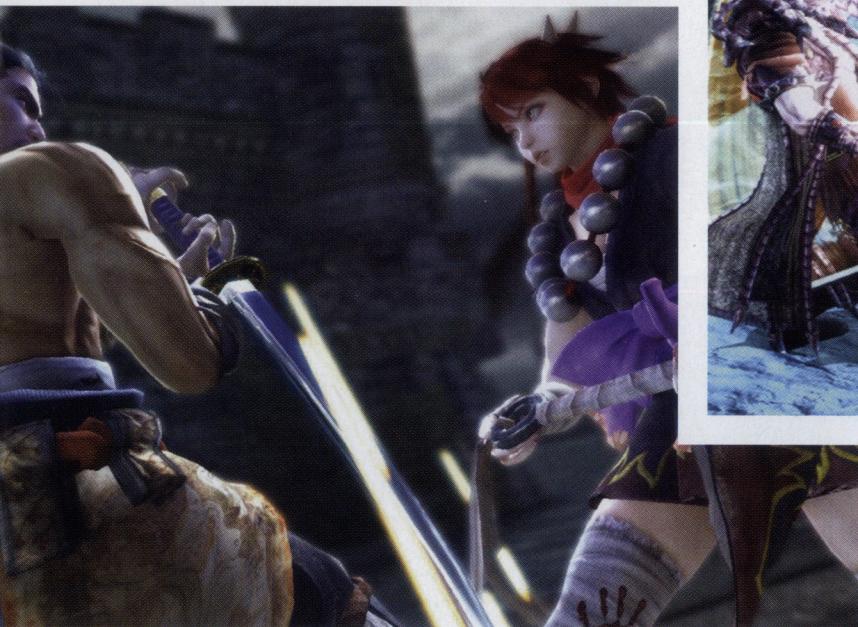
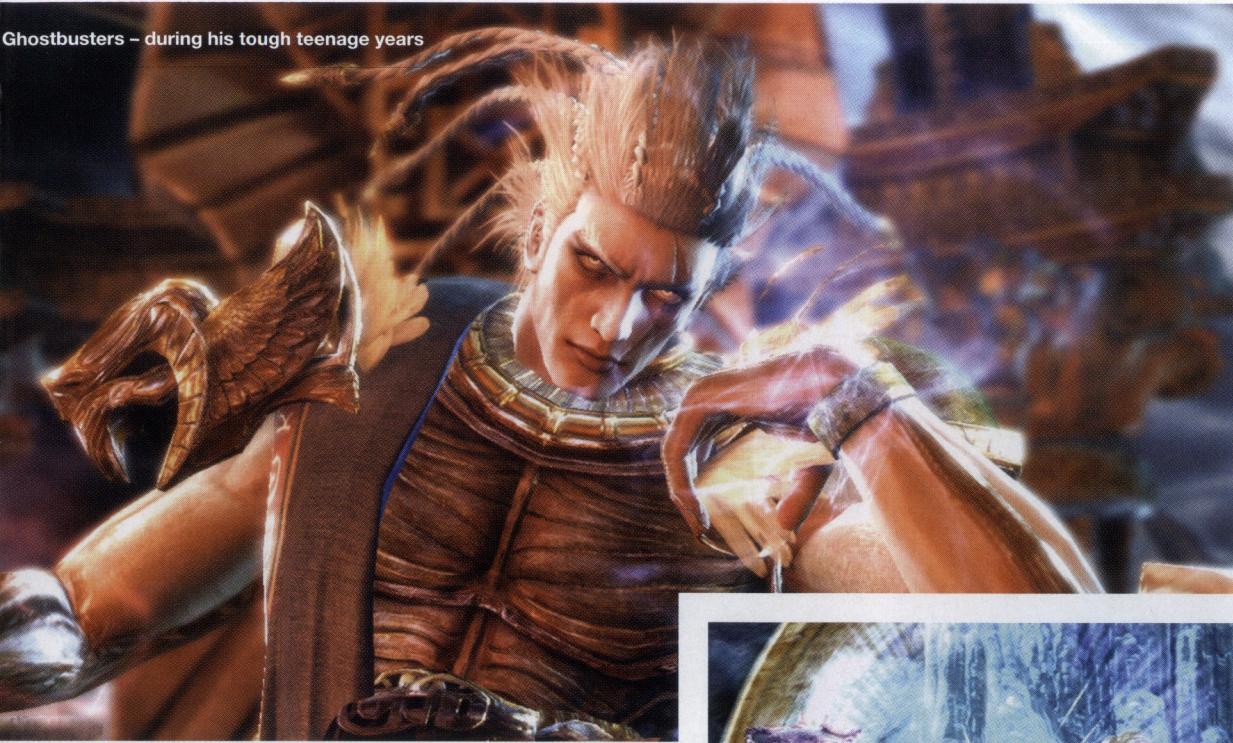
fantasy realm populated with grunting samurais, knights touting 6-foot swords, dagger-laden gimps, and ogres, each new version of the game has featured the same pap-ridden story as the last. There's a magic sword (or in this case two swords) in high demand that attracts a string of bladed marauders to kill for it. While there's nothing inherently wrong with a fighting game story that fits on the back of a Fantales wrapper, we're still a little perplexed why Namco Bandai didn't try to have a little fun with their fifth *Soul* game. However critiquing a fighting game on its story is like striking down a horror film for over acting. It's a good thing then *Soulcalibur IV* has it where it counts.

And that's gameplay. As mentioned

the real appeal of the *Soul* series – and the reason it trumps the technically brilliant *Virtua Fighter 5* – is its ability to entertain 24-hour players (who treat the purchase of a new fighting game like entering the monkhood) as well as folk who've never played a biff bonanza in their lives. Body-cutting slices that light up the screen with blazing pyro traces require nothing more than the press of a couple of buttons; perfect fodder for novices happy to massage the control pad on their quest for victory. Pros, on the other hand, can jump into the game head first as they learn the game's thousands of moves and master counter-attacking techniques. In short, *SCIV* is whatever you want it to be.



Ghostbusters – during his tough teenage years



■ Sideboob... underboob... argh! Everywhere boob!

SOUL VADER

Darth Vader kicks some considerable hein in SCIV using a bunch of rapid saber attacks and bashing Force powers like Force Choke. While he can't do anything acrobatic the same can't be said for the other Sith in the game. In one of the biggest cash-ins ever, SCIV stars The Apprentice from the upcoming *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed!* This guy is a right bastard to defeat as the penultimate opponent in the game's Arcade mode. He's faster than Vader and can do crazy stuff like leaping into the air and reigniting lightning. It will be possible to play as The Apprentice eventually, but at the moment the option seems locked.

That said, the inclusion of these two is completely out of place in the SCIV world. If anything, this little tie-in has riled up our appetite for a *Soulcalibur*-styled *Star Wars* game, like the old *Masters of Teras Kasi* on PSone. Except good. Off you go, Namco Bandai. Chop-chop.



“...the swank new online functionality – the best thing about *Soulcalibur IV* – is at the mercy of your home setup.”

But we've been singing this tune of praise since *Soulcalibur II* came out back on the PS2. We want innovation. We need it. It needn't be dramatic, but it needs to yield a notably different experience than the one we feel when stabbing our way through the previous *Soul* games. What's the point of buying this otherwise?

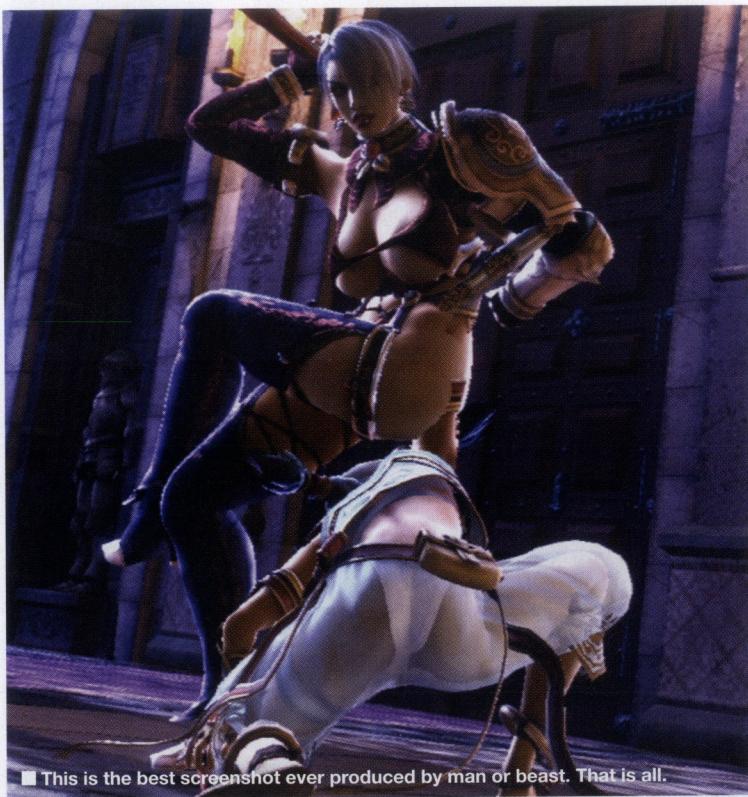
Without doubt the big new feature in SCIV is the presence of online play. Notably it features something called Active Matching Battle which is supposed to suss out how crap you are then pair you up with an equally dud player while the full-timers get their game on. Sounds 'revolutionary' right? That really depends.

If you happen to have a blistering internet connection, that rivals the CIA's in terms of connectivity and speed, you'll no doubt welcome SCIV with palm branches. However, if you're one of Australia's many who have to endure substandard speeds thanks to our heinous oligopolies and rusted infrastructure, then playing

a fighting game online may not be so tantalising. Anyone who has ever tried to play *Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online* will know what we're talking about. While in shooters a delay of a fraction of a second might see you shoot a moving foe in the left cranial hemisphere rather than the right, such a lapse in a fighting game can mean the difference between victory and defeat. In short, the swank new online functionality – the best thing about *Soulcalibur IV* – is at the mercy of your home setup.

An unavoidable reality – we know. After having to wait three years since the release of SCIII, and with the power of the PS3 at their fingertips, surely the rest of the new additions crafted by Namco are worthy enough to live up to the series' pedigree? Well, erm, read on.

The roster is a good place to start when working out just how much work has gone into a new iteration of a fighting game. We all know you all desperately want to know about Darth bloody Vader,



■ This is the best screenshot ever produced by man or beast. That is all.



SOULCALIBUR CANDIDATES

Here's a quick list of the other folk we think would fit into the *Soulcalibur* roster courtesy of the Create-a-Fighter mode.

• Russell Crowe

Using the short Roman sword. "Husband to a murdered wife, father to a murdered son – and I will have my vengeance."

• Dolph Lundgren

Using the Soulcalibur itself. Who are we to deny the original He-Man.

• Christopher Lambert

Using the samurai sword. There can be only one.

• Errol Flynn

Using the rapier. The original Aussie sword scoundrel. Made love to half the known world during his lifetime.

• Lorenzo Lamas

Using the dual swords. Just Google the guy. Hilarious.



“...you can't make new Jedi or make a pink Darth Vader. Which bites.”

so feel free to skip down to 'Soul Vader' to fill yourselves in. As for the rest of the roster, it features all the characters from the series since the original *Soulcalibur* with the exception of sideliners such as Inferno, Edge Master, and Hwang. There are also a few new kids that've been brought to the court to play, the best by far is Hilde, a holy medieval knight chick who uses a long spear to skewer foes like a cocktail sandwich and a shorter sword when up close. The other new characters, Amy and Setsuka, are about as exciting as AM radio. Twit-like teenage girls who dart around and poke you with butter knives and umbrellas (really) may factor into Japanese fetishisms but are not what we want.

Star Wars cash in aside, one decent new character in the form of Hilde isn't exactly electrifying. Fortunately Namco Bandai seemed to have pre-empted such

disappointment. During our play test OPS managed to take to the stage of history with a very special character indeed. A man against which all other men are judged – Chuck Norris.

Okay, so maybe we had to 'create' him in the updated 'Create-a-Fighter' mode, but so what? Chuck rocked. He was followed by a bo-staff wielding Steven Seagal and a chocolate skinned warriorette who flaunted a chest balcony large enough to recite Shakespeare from. In other words, you can have some fun creating your own metal-wielding champions. But only some.

Like the other new SCIV additions, this mode needed to be better. There

seem to be more things you can't do than can. You can't select your fighter's height or individually alter their facial features. Can't make hideous monsters, can't even select the moves for your fighter to use. In the end, you're ultimately just reskinning one of the game's existing characters, something the game does plenty of anyway when introducing you to its 'bonus' characters. And no, while the subject is up, you can't make new Jedi or make a pink Darth Vader. Which bites.

Aside from your fighter's appearance, a lot of the customisation options are related to SCIV's new Equipment and Skill elements. For a start every time you go into battle in SCIV your character has an

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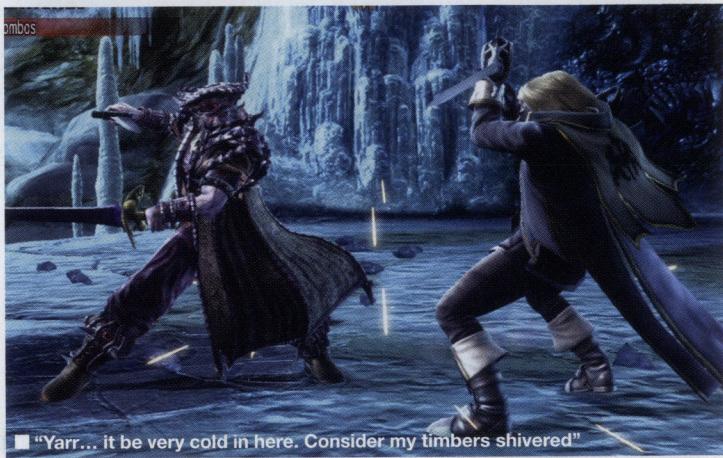




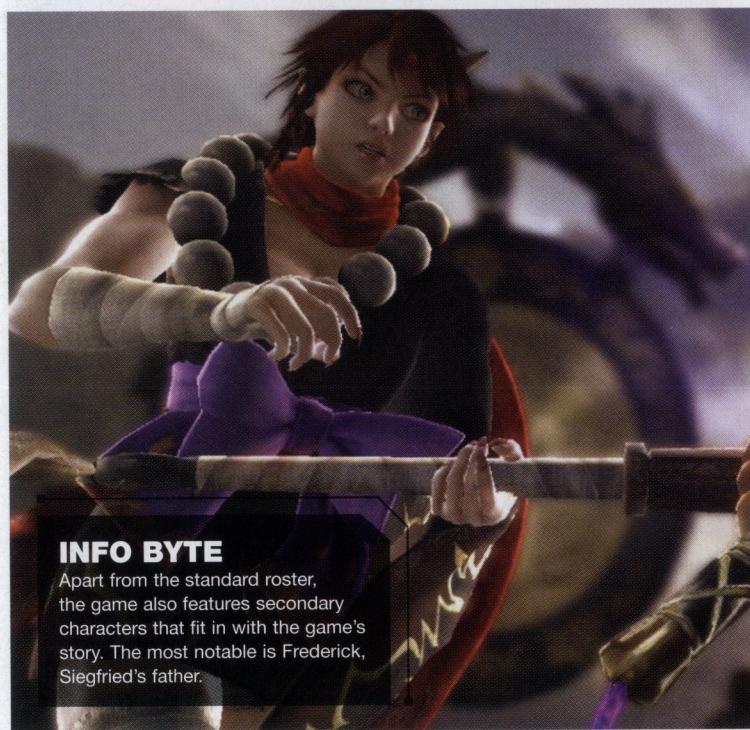
■ Really, there's a big bare arse in this screenshot – are we supposed to ignore that?



■ "I got skills... nunchaku skills... bo-staff skills..."



■ "Yarr... it be very cold in here. Consider my timbers shivered"



INFO BYTE

Apart from the standard roster, the game also features secondary characters that fit in with the game's story. The most notable is Frederick, Siegfried's father.



equipment indicator under their life bar. Block too many shots in, say the legs, and your loin armour will be destroyed and future attacks to that area will pound you down like a circus peg. You'll also lose other benefits provided like increased damage or defence. It's not a bad little idea, but we found that to lose a piece of equipment was not all that common and only happened during bouts with extremely defensive opposition.

The Skill element in SCIV is a bit more relevant. Basically as you create a character, kit them up with equipment, and level them up in combat, you can obtain skills to use in battle. Some of these skills are always active – like the ability to decrease your chances of being knocked out of the ring – while others,

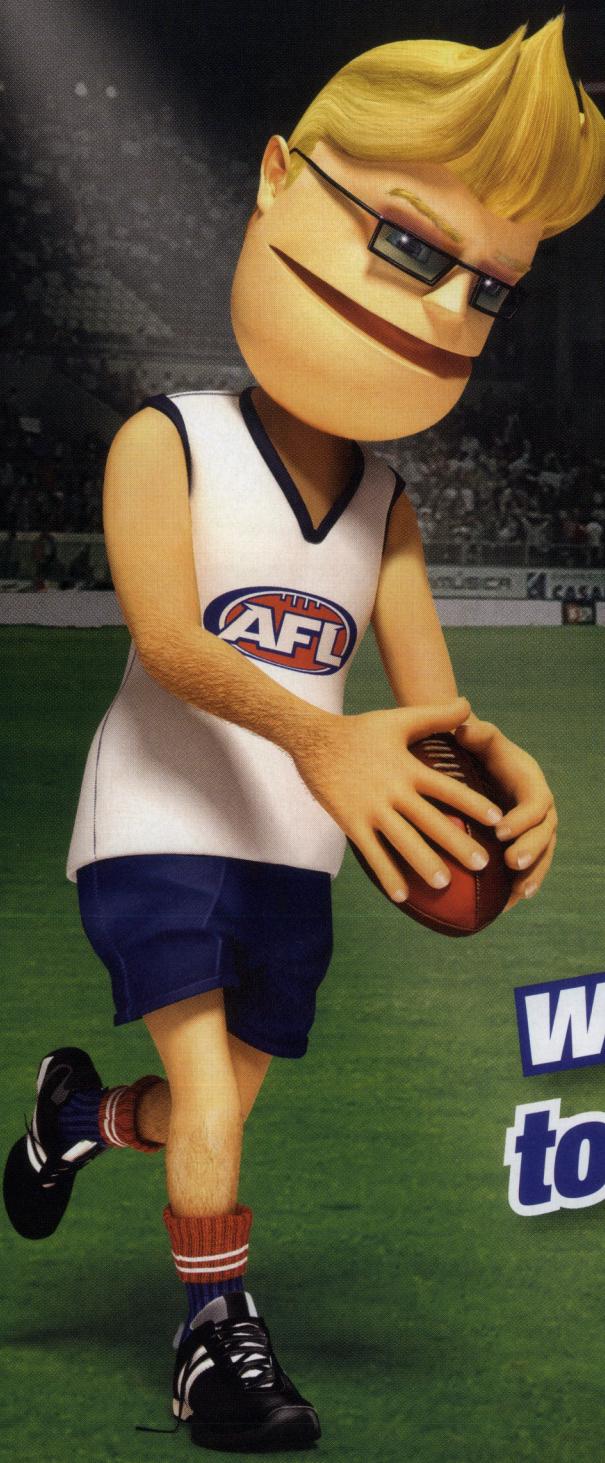
like Invisibility, require you activate them with the press of a shoulder button. Our money is on Skills being a relevant footnote for high-tiered bouts between gurus, even though it doesn't transform the game all that much.

However you can only use the above Equipment and Skill elements in the game's Story and Tower of Souls modes. Story mode plays differently to Arcade in that it's a cross between a Survival and a Tag match. There are no rounds, instead you get a written blurb that has something to do with your wooden character's mission and then have to take down up to four foes with the same life bar. Complete a few rounds of this and you'll complete your character's 'story' and earn some gold. It's a bit piss poor really.





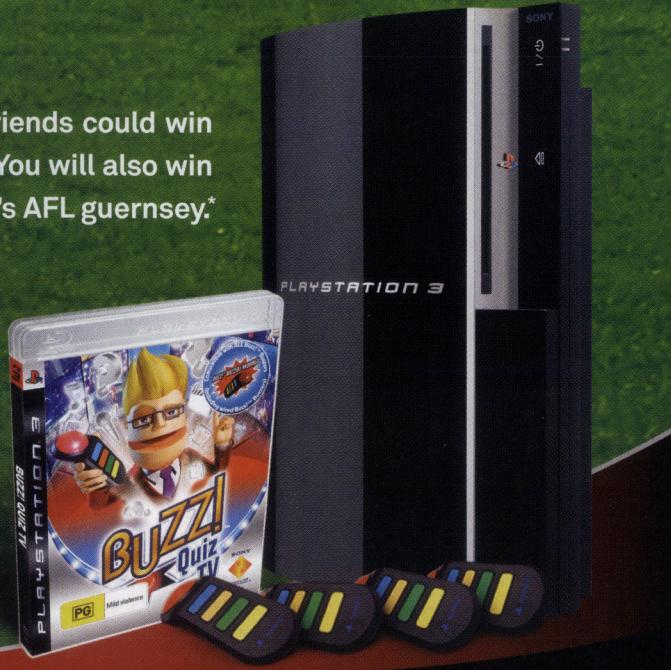
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■ "But we need to stick close, for body warmth..." "NEVER"



Tower of Souls offers two ways to play. You can either descend the tower which yields a purer type of survival mode, or you ascend the tower and try to conquer a floor at a time. If you don't think that sounds terribly exciting it's because it's not.

Most of the time it feels more like a grating chore that never ends. It's not enjoyment that gets you throttling through each floor, but the curiosity that your strict devotion to competing such a mundane task will yield you with some sort of kinky character to wield.

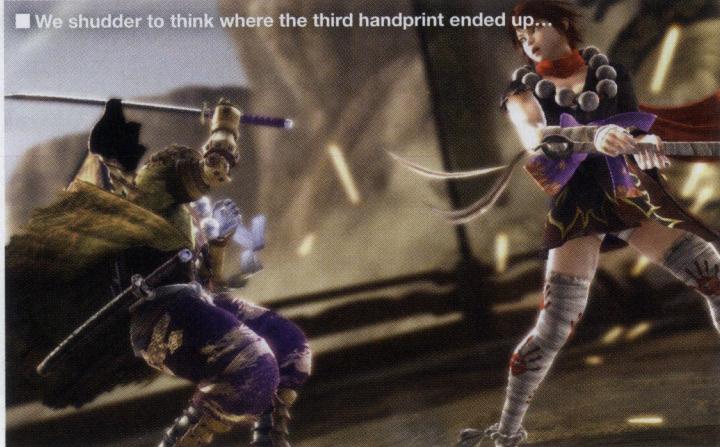
While we're putting the boot into what is, ironically, still the best fighting series in existence (at least till *Street Fighter IV* comes out) we'd also like to have a right Aussie whinge about the direction Namco Bandai are taking the game in terms

of vocal and visual presentation. The soundtrack for the epic call-to-arms in the game is again beyond reproach, but the sound bites each character utters at the start of each round – and even during – are offensively bad. When nunchaku maestro Maxi belches out "shut up" as he delivers one of his whacking moves you can't help but feel embarrassed. It's like being in the middle of a Primary School shove around.

Secondly, we've noticed that Namco Bandai have never managed to repeat the amazing jump in visual quality that *Soulcalibur* was over – well everything else in existence. *SCIV* does look glittery and smart – no question – but we desperately want a fighting game that raises the graphical bar with realistic lighting and shadow effects. In short: we



■ We shudder to think where the third handprint ended up...



FINISH HIM

There's been a bit of excitement in regards to *SCIV*'s new Critical Finishes, finishing moves that can end a round instantly. Unfortunately these are quite naff. Along with your standard Life Gauge each character also has a Soul Gauge that changes colour from blue to red, the latter meaning a player is blocking like a pansy. Provided the attacking opponent continues to wail away at the blocking idiot, they'll be able to perform a Critical Finish with the touch of a shoulder button. Lame.



want it to look real.

But don't get us wrong, if we've been hard on *SCIV* it's only because expectations for the series are so orbitally high. Make no mistake, hardened fans of the *Soulcalibur* series should march out immediately and pick this up, if not for any other reason than it's an online *Soul* game in HD. But if you're just a casual fan who played the game on PS2 and aren't interested in playing online the frail new additions here don't warrant your hard-earned pennies. **James Ellis**

PROS:

- Best piece of biff pie around
- Duke it out online

CONS:

- Improvements are token
- Create-a-Fighter disappoints

VERDICT: *SCIV* is a phenomenal game but it'll be a letdown for those hoping for evolution...

OFFICIAL

SCORE:

08

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INTERACTION

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PARTY
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

■ PLAYERS: 1
■ PRICE: \$79.95
■ HD: 720p
■ WEB: www.guitarhero.com

■ BACK STORY: With the all new *Guitar Hero World Tour* looking set to blow our collective minds, it's hard to shake the feeling that *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* is a bit of a stop gap. Following Aerosmith's rise to fame, this title is a little limited in its tracklist.

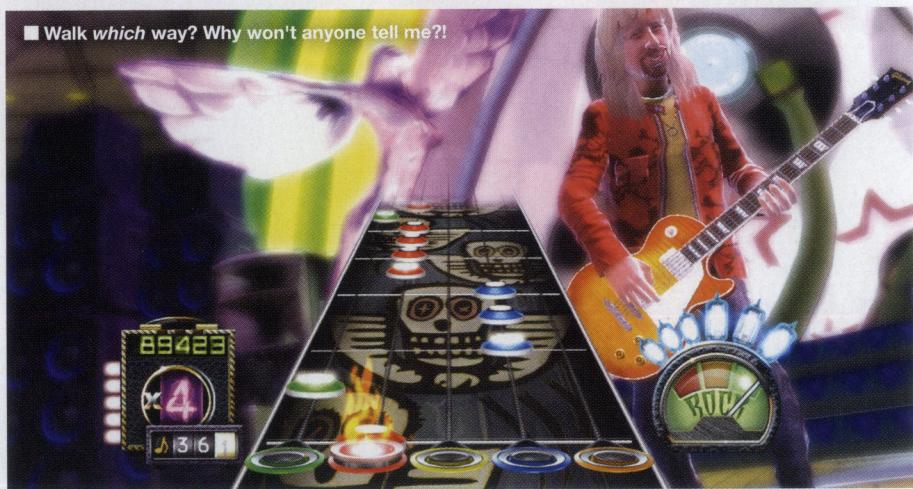
■ He could eat that mic, in one gulp, easily



INFO BYTE

Steven Tyler is actually 384 years old and can fit 5 tennis balls in his mouth at the same time. He invented the telephone and the electric lightbulb. The character of Willy Wonka was based on his life story.

■ Walk which way? Why won't anyone tell me?!



GUITAR HERO AEROSMITH

Nobody rocks like Shelbyville!

At this moment in time, Australians are in a predicament that is ours exclusively: *Rock Band* or *Guitar Hero World Tour*. While the Yanks and the Eurotrash have been enjoying *Rock Band* for ages, we've been twiddling our pluckin' thumbs waiting for EA to get their fingers out of whatever orifice they've stuck it up, and get the game to these shores: STAT.

The result is that, as of right now, Activision and the *Guitar Hero* franchises seems to be a more solid choice – since they don't seem to mind releasing their gear in a timely fashion. In fact most fans waiting patiently for *Rock Band* have been whiling away the hours with the solid *Guitar Hero 3* as a substitute.

And the fact that *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* has hit Australia without any fanfare is testament to the fact that Activision have been providing us with the goods sans any problems or delays.

But, sadly, in the case of *Aerosmith*, you kind of wish they hadn't. While *Rocks the 80s* was a welcome diversion in preparation for the next 'proper' *Guitar Hero*, this effort sells itself short by being so completely niche: if you love *Aerosmith* then sure, you'll enjoy this game. Otherwise it'll leave you completely cold.

In addition, the promise of songs from bands other than *Aerosmith* is essentially rendered mute by the fact that other songs on the list are bands that either influenced, or were influenced by, *Aerosmith*. Even the most rabid fan of the band will find themselves tiring of the repetition after a while...

But the major issue with *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* is a bit more problematic than just the soundtrack – the entire mechanics of the game, while still fundamentally sound, are starting to date. *Aerosmith* is a stop gap on the

way towards the incredible looking *Guitar Hero World Tour*, and it shows. The fact that *Rock Band* hasn't made it to Australia might make it easier for fans to swallow, but as of now Harmonix's baby is eons ahead of *GH*.

That being said, the presentation, and the high concept behind *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith*, is fundamentally sound. Playing as *Aerosmith*, through the history of *Aerosmith* is an interesting idea, and the addition of interviews with the band guiding players through each stage of *Aerosmith*'s rise to greatness, is a brilliant touch, providing context to the progression.

But ultimately, this will be of little significance if you hate the band, and that is the overlying problem. As much as *Aerosmith* are a successful band, they're no *Rolling Stones* or *Led Zeppelin* – they're no-one's favourite band, and as such playing almost exclusively as *Aerosmith* is unlikely to appeal to many.

■ **Mark Serrels**

WALK THIS WAY

Aerosmith hold a pretty solid claim to being the most successful American band still active today having sold over 150 million records worldwide, and almost 60 million in the USA alone. But despite being extremely popular in the 70s it wasn't until the 80s and 90s that the band began being recognised for their achievements. Despite being around since the forever, all of *Aerosmith*'s Grammy wins came in the 90s.



PROS:

- *GH* remains awesome
- Cool interviews

CONS:

- Song list... ew
- Extremely dated

VERDICT: A dated stop gap en route to *Guitar Hero World Tour*

OFFICIAL SCORE:
06



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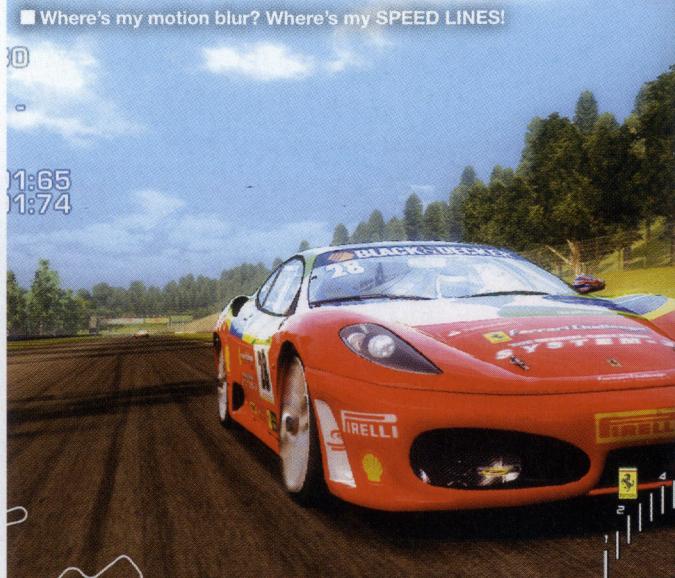


PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING
■ RELEASE: AUGUST 2008
■ DEVELOPER: EUTECHNYX
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1 (1-16 ONLINE)
■ PRICE: \$109.95
■ HD: 720p
■ WEB: www.eutechnyx.com

■ BACK STORY: Previous to this release *Ferrari F355 Challenge* roared out on the PS2 back in 2002. Made by Sega, it too was a racing Nazi that took realism to the limit. You see a pattern? Yeah, don't expect an arcade Ferrari game anytime soon.



FERRARI CHALLENGE TROFEO PIRELLI

Flog an Italian stallion

Who can stay angry at the Italians? Despite having a soccer team packed with ballerinas and a history of some of the foulest violence the planet has seen, they're also responsible for mastering the pizza pie, Monica Bellucci (heretofore known as Mrs. Sex), and of course, Ferrari. Like the aforementioned Mrs. Sex, the effect Ferraris have on the populace en masse is largely confined to the realm of fantasy. Seeking to quench this automobile lust, publisher System 3 has brought us *Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli*, an official Ferrari game featuring all the cars and tracks from the official Challenge season. But have they been able to capture the ego of the real thing?

For a game starring a car associated with 80s TV shows and \$10 posters that pimp pieces of lady pie with their baps out, *Ferrari Challenge* takes itself mighty seriously. The driving model here feels *Turismo*-esque and thrives on tactical cornering, precise braking, and balanced acceleration out of turns. For instance, brake a half second less than you should when scooting around hairpins and you'll book a long stay in the off-track sand. Ignore other battle tactics, such as slipstreaming and racing lines, and success is as likely as finding a needle in a mountain of bolognese. It's just not going to happen.

Nope, this is a hardboiled racer for that breed of gamer that lives for

simulations. Such zealots will be equally chuffed to discover that apart from the already stoic engine roaring under the bonnet by default, a set of assists can be tweaked to add even more grit to the on-track action.

While ditching these training wheels doesn't immaculately transform the racing experience, it does shrink the fudge room you have when scooting around hairy corners and dabbling in hard braking. That said, one assist that does make a massive difference if activated is the Racing Line option. Like in *GTA Prologue*, this maps out the ideal racing line on the track, but also feeds back real-time information on when you should be slowing down by changing from

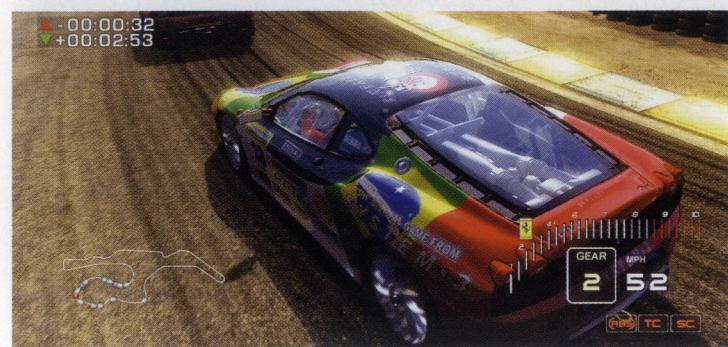
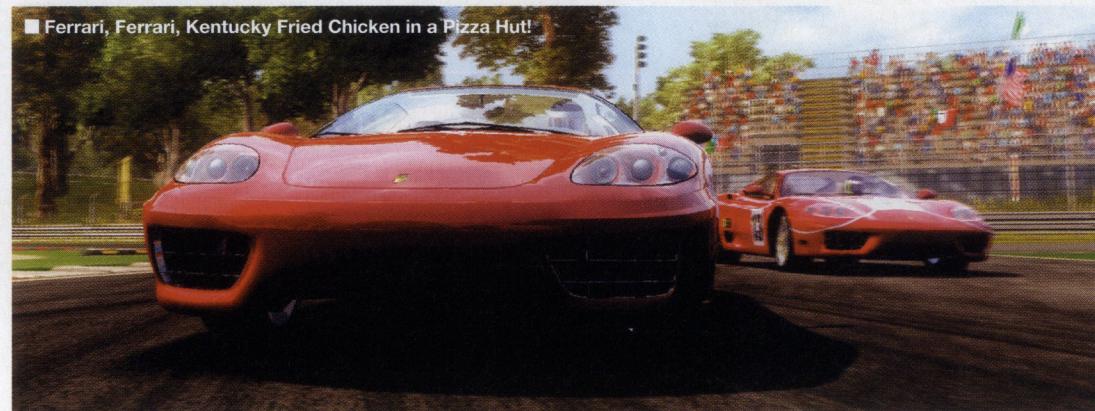
go-go green to slam-on-the-brakes red – fantastic for first timers.

Overall it's easy to be impressed with the way Ferrari handles, regardless of whether you're a mechanical boffin, or a racer out for some cheap thrills. It could've strayed too far down either side of the great arcade-simulation divide, but it hasn't. Instead it's taken the unapologetic realism of *Gran Turismo*, ditched the cappuccinos, and gone straight for the money mobiles. You'll be tickling heavenly speeds in your first race in other words.

Unfortunately that's really the only feather in Ferrari's cap. Boxed in by the fact that this is an official piece of Ferrari spunk (there's even a slick little Ferrari



“...it’s taken the unapologetic realism of Gran Turismo, ditched the Cappuccinos, and gone straight for the money mobiles.”



code sticker on the box to prove it) the game offers a paltry amount of game modes. Apart from the usual Arcade, Time Trial, and Quick Race modes, the main port of call is the Challenge mode – and it’s a bit dull.

Spread over three sorts of leagues that include Italy, Europe, and the USA, you race through each of their 7 tracks twice in a row to amass points. Apart from the bumbling annoyance of having to

race the same track back to back, there's the further ache that Ferrari's challenge events are based on duration and not a set number of laps.

Kicking off the Italian league we jumped on the Monza track – a 15 minute race. After a couple of laps we worked our way into the lead before having to numbingly speed around the track for another 8 minutes with our opponents in the fog behind us. When we finally

INFO BYTE

Acting as a consultant on this game was GP2 driver Bruno Senna, nephew of the late Ayrton. He was brought in to ensure the cars felt like the real thing. We'd love to tell you if he succeeded, but alas no one at OPS owns a Ferrari.

DOWNLOAD A FERRARI

Despite the game already featuring over 50 Ferraris, Ferrari Challenge is set to feature the largest set of downloadable content the PlayStation has yet seen. According to publisher System 3 there's already 20 packs ready to be rolled out – one a month – with each including cars and at least one track. The hope is that eventually almost every Ferrari ever conceived will be available for download.



Gran Turismo 5 will undoubtedly stretch the lead further when released.

There is, at least, online multiplayer that grants players some freedom. It's even possible to create a team and try to garner a reputation for record breaking as you chip away at track times on the global leaderboard. But then again, it's a feature that's all too common these days to really elevate *Ferrari Challenge* above its other breakdowns.

This isn't a bad game at all. In fact the driving model is damn near perfect. We're just less enthused about how it has been applied. Ferrari may be the king of the automobile jungle, but this release isn't at the top of the food chain. **James Ellis**

PROS:

- Superbly balanced driving
- Drive a Ferrari!

CONS:

- Repetitive Challenge mode
- Limited car tinkering

VERDICT:

Serious and robust – sounds like a game about Volvos rather than piping hot Ferraris.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

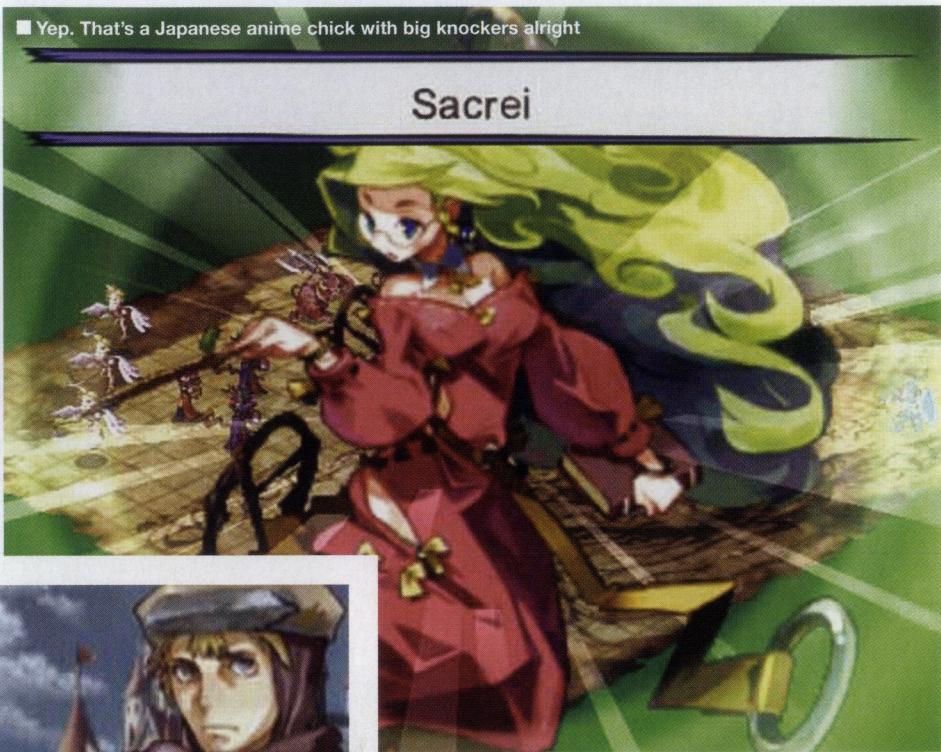
07

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: RPG
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: NIPPON ICHI
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

■ PLAYERS: 1
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.thesoulnomad.com

■ BACK STORY: Nippon Ichi are famous the world over for their rather unique turn-based, strategy games or RPG's. There are dozens of these weird titles that have a depth of narrative and sense of a living world that could rival any western counterpart.



SOUL NOMAD & THE WORLD EATERS

It's time to save the world... and decorate away the evil!

When people at parties, family gatherings or cock fights come up to a member of OPS, the question they invariably ask is: "Do you finish all the games you review?"

It's a fair query. After all, you wouldn't trust a film critic who only watched the opening credits of a flick, then bugged off to the pub, telling everyone it makes *Citizen Kane* look about as entertaining as watching a morbidly obese man search his fat folds for a salami sandwich.

The answer depends, of course, on the game. Titles like *MGS4*, *GTA IV* and *COD4* are obviously played through again and again - but that's hardly a chore. No, it's games like wacky Japanese RPG *Soul Nomad* that really put us through our paces.

The first hour or so of play with *Soul Nomad* verges on the ludicrous. Cutesy little squashed characters banging on about the world ending, and your

character being possessed by a being of inordinate power named Gig.

Confused? Yeah, try playing it!

Imagine those insanely long *MGS4* cut scenes but with cutesy, previous-gen graphics, and even more convoluted plot and redundant dialogue.

Actually, going back to that question we get asked - no, we didn't finish *Soul Nomad*. It's a huge, complex and subjective experience - but we did give it a whole heaping helping of time and you know what? It actually ends up being pretty entertaining.

Wacky Japanese RPG fans will delight in this latest strange manner of character deployment. It involves, wait for it, interior decorating.

Take a moment and think about that. See you can buy 'rooms' and deck out each room with a theme, buy characters - who you can upgrade and name yourself - of various strengths of abilities

and summon said groups when you're embarking upon one of the game's many battles.

Look, this is a game unlikely to win over new fans of RPG's, especially when prettier and more accessible titles like *Folklore* are on the PS3, but if you like insanely detailed levels of character depth, fighting massive, multi-screen-sized monsters and making your room look pretty (hey, don't look at us - we just work here!) then *Soul Nomad & the World Eaters* will certainly serve as an odd little time eater. Worth a swatch.

— Anthony O'Connor

FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

Okay, so you've seen turn-based fights before. Your various groups occupy what looks like a chess board with mountains and rivers. From there you get into a bingle and the screen changes to the battle screen. Here you can fight traditionally or use some truly bizarre powers. There are a lot of options here for those who care.



PROS:

- A massive, intricate world
- Original and satisfying

CONS:

- The graphics are a bit crap
- Very, very niche

VERDICT: At times bizarre, but somehow manages to hold your attention.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
06

■ GENRE: RETRO
■ RELEASE: JULY 2008
■ DEVELOPER: TAITO
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

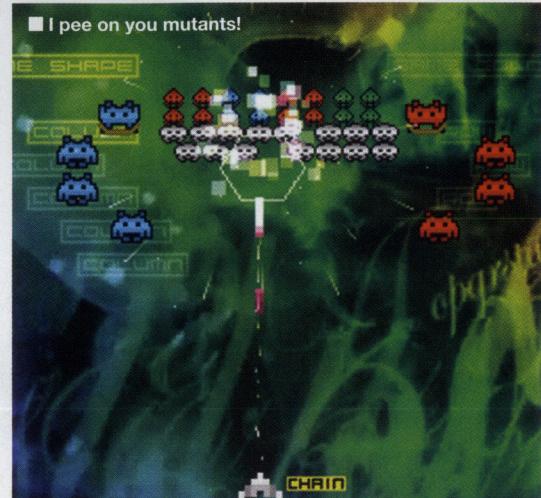
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$49.95
■ GAMESHARE: NO
■ WEB: www.taito.com

■ BACK STORY: Carbon dated to somewhere in the mid '70s, from a time when your parents were probably stoned listening to Pink Floyd. *Space Invaders* is the granddaddy of... Oh, c'mon, seriously? Everyone knows what *Space Invaders* is.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

INFO BYTE

Annoyingly, we PSP owners miss out on the extended multiplayer features in the DS version of the game. While we just get local versus play (no game sharing), they get sharing, online play and global leaderboards. But our version looks much prettier!



SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

Despite the name, there are no skateboards, BMX or a pop-punk soundtrack

You know that game you used to play back then – 10, 20, even 30 years ago – when you were just discovering the magic of videogames? When that nascent virtual world dazzled with possibility enhanced by the fertile imagination of the young; an imagination capable of dreaming so much of so little?

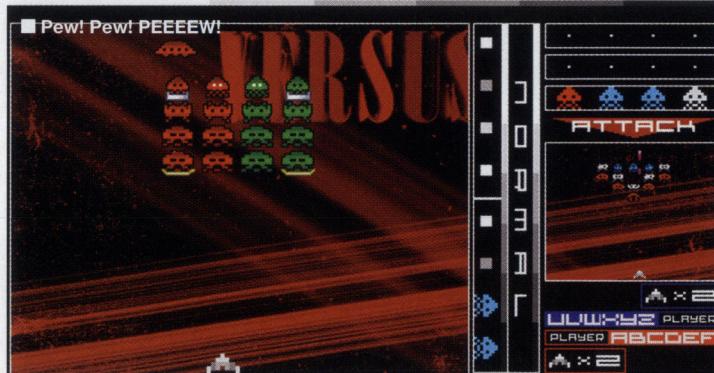
That game was amazing and took you places you'd never been. Thinking back on it now, it still thrills you, reminisced through eyes glassy with nostalgia.

But then you play it again for the first time in decades... and it's kinda deflating. It's different now. But it's not the game that's different: you realise you're playing the same game but you've changed. You've become older, more mature, and imagination fails to fill in the gaps like it used to.

Space Invaders Extreme is the game that managed to change with you. Or perhaps it's the game that really is as good as you remember it to be.

Gameplay formulas don't come much simpler than this, so any update runs the risk of overcomplication. Conversely, don't do enough and that simplicity remains rooted in the past. Taito has wisely drawn inspiration from cool, contemporary sources, namely the work of Testsuya Mizuguchi (*Rez*, *Lumines*) and the vitality of Namco's recent *Pac-Man* reimagining on XBLA.

Frankly, it looks gorgeous. Explosions of colour fill the screen as you lay waste



to each column of aliens, but the clean lines keep things in focus. Stylish abstraction ensures the elegance of the original is maintained; no pretence to plot, no lame idea that you're really saving the world to obscure the purity of the shoot 'em up.

The pew-pew-pew! of your ship's fire, complemented by every other sound effect, sync brilliantly with the music to create the same kind of aural compulsion that so benefited the likes of *Lumines*.

Where Taito has elected to embellish, they've done so thoughtfully. Power-ups in the shape of more destructive weaponry, granted for shooting four like-coloured aliens in a row and limited to a short timer (which, cleverly, you can pause), expand your tactical scope. Aliens with shields, that can reflect types of fire, that can turn

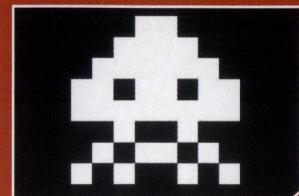
sideways to narrow the target, that come in all sorts of sizes, and bosses that have handy weak spots all combine to deliver swathes of variety that enhance the core experience.

Space Invaders Extreme works because Taito built a modern game whilst not losing sight of what made the original so wondrous at the time. I'd like to think we'll be playing it in 10, 20 or even 30 years. **▲**

David Wildgoose

HI SCORE

When *Space Invaders* first came out in 1978 it had a lot of Sci-fi greats to draw from. *Star Wars: A New Hope* had been released the previous year and *Breakout* the Atari arcade game was making waves. Yet, this simplistic arcade title caused a temporary shortage of Yen in Japan and has been named as the game that took videogaming from a novelty to a global industry. It also netted Taito a sweet US \$500 million in sweet gaming revenue.



PROS:

- A breathtaking reinvention
- Perfect for portable play

CONS:

- You hate nostalgia
- You hate life

VERDICT:

It's impossible to imagine a better way to be playing *Space Invaders* 30 years later.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

09

We pull on a tux and cummerbund and turn on the charm with the *Bond* series, head to the future, get inked, feel the force and become a *Semi Pro*!



How is it that the *Bond* series is only the second most successful series in our black and white world? Surely some kid with a broom stuck up him that runs from puppies, three headed or not, isn't more successful than a sleek, womaniser who knows how he likes his drinks and has more habits than a nunneries laundry basket.

Bond being a man of many faces, these three box sets will allow you to choose your favourite man. Surely, it will be the original toupee wearing Bond, Sean

Connery, often voted as the finest man to don the suit but who writer of the series Ian Fleming called "Dreadful. Simply dreadful.

Maybe the philosophy of *Live and Let Die* is more up your alley and you'll be shelling out for the Roger Moore set. The longest serving Bond, with 12 years under his belt, he didn't drink martinis shaken but not stirred, wasn't briefed in the office by Q and preferred cigars to cigarettes.

Remington Steele became James Bond as Pierce Brosnan a non-smoking, Italian suit wearing

agent reported to a woman. Brosnan revived the character that many thought was an "icon of the past".

Whatever your flavour, the man in black and white will seduce you with a wink of the eye. It all comes down to have you like your spies!

VERDICT: A slice of class, which is often missing in modern day spy films. Grab a lady, jet off to an exotic location and take on a villain.



DVD OF THE MONTH

BOND ACTOR BOXSETS (M)

■ STARRING: Sean Connery, Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan

■ DIRECTOR: Various



PAST BOND

We line 'em up with a bit of a stir!



SEAN CONNERY

The first and most loved Bond, Thomas Sean Connery is known for retaining his Scottish accent throughout every film, no matter the setting, as he is for the roles he played.



GEORGE LAZENBY

Who? Australian George Robert Lazenby was the highest paid model in the world in 1968. They cast him as the second Bond in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, he couldn't act.



ROGER MOORE

The Saint, is also a bit of a sinner. Known firstly for his role as Simon Templar, then as James Bond in seven films from 1973 till 1985, Moore was quite the ladies man. Married four times!



TIMOTHY DALTON

Dalton had been considered for the role of James Bond four times before his Shakespeare career cleared him to take over from Roger Moore in 1987 success *The Living Daylights*.



PIERCE BROSnan

The first actor to not only play the role on screen but to lend his face and voice to the videogame *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing*. This Bond is currently starring in *Mamma Mia!*

COMEDY**FUTURAMA – THE BEAST WITH A BILLION BACKS (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Billy West, Katey Sagal, John Di Maggio and David Cross
■ **CREATOR:** Matt Groening



The second of four direct to DVD movies is entertaining enough, but it's lost a bit of its luster. The rip in the fabric of space and time from 'Bender's Big Score' unleashes a new, more intimate terror.

A giant tentacle monster has disturbing plans for Earth that may violate each and every one of us! Add the death of Kif, a mysterious League of Robots and a lovelorn Fry to the mix and you've got the usual shenanigans and insanity the series was known for. Though we're a bit behind the rest of the world we are at least pleased to see the release hitting our shores in a timely manner.

■ **VERDICT:** Perhaps switching back to the 22-minute weekly format might bring back a little more sharpness.



WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT ANTHROPOMORPHIC FAST FOOD COULD BE SO FUNNY? AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE, SET IN SOUTH JERSEY, WAS ORIGINALLY BILLED AS A DETECTIVE CRIME FIGHTING SQUAD BUT THEY FIGURED NOTHING WOULD EVER GET SOLVED!

COMEDY**SEMI-PRO (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Will Ferrell, Woody Harrelson, Andre Benjamin and Will Arnett
■ **DIRECTOR:** Kent Alterman



Jackie Moon, owner/player/coach of the Flint Michigan Tropics' dreams of being a part of basketball royalty become a reality when their fledgling ABA

League merges with the NBA. Set in the 70s, much hilarity does ensue with many Anchorman alumni in the mix, yet at times they force the joke and it becomes ridiculously unfunny. Andre Benjamin has great comic timing and the guy can actually act and Will Arnett, as usual, steals just about every scene he's in. Thankfully the outfits are ridiculous enough that you can be distracted from obvious flaws in the film. Perhaps it's time to hand up those boots straps!

■ **VERDICT:** Not as bad as we thought it'd be, but no-where near as good as we'd hoped.

**COMEDY****ROBOT CHICKEN – STAR WARS SPECIAL (MA15+)**

■ **STARRING:** Seth Green, Seth MacFarlane and George Lucas
■ **CREATOR:** Seth Green and Matthew Senreich

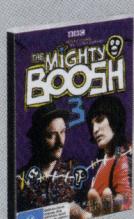


So much more than a bunch of guys playing with dolls. The lack of a coherent plot is of little consequence in this hilarious, skit based Star Wars piss-take. Cameos abound with voices supplied by Donald Faison, Breckin Meyer, Malcolm MacDowell, Conan O'Brien, Seth MacFarlane and even George Lucas himself! Who would have thought he'd have the time? There's a few duds, but definitely much more hit than miss, the scene with Boba Fett taunting Han Solo in carbonite is worth the price of admission alone!

■ **VERDICT:** Sharp, witty and a gutful of laughs. The Force is strong with this one.

**COMEDY****THE MIGHTY BOOSH – SERIES 3 (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Julian Barratt, Dave Brown, Michael Fielding, Noel Fielding and Rich Fulcher
■ **CREATOR:** Julian Barratt and Noel Fielding



This is quite a multi-media event with creators/comedians Julian Barratt and Noel Fielding taking their musical, radio and stage acts and shrinking it down into a more easily digestible format for TV. Each episode begins and ends in the Zooniverse (a rundown zoo) with the leads, Vince and Howard, often whisking themselves off to outlandish places like the Arctic or limbo, and finding themselves caught in surreal situations. Keep an eye out for the motion picture, said to be in the works.

■ **VERDICT:** Certainly not to everyone's taste, but well worth a look and a giggle.

**RESERVOIR DOGS**

■ **DIRECTOR:** Quentin Tarantino
■ **STARRING:** Tim Roth, Michael Madsen



Brilliant and blood soaked take on a heist gone terribly wrong. Standout performances from the entire cast with a particularly chilling torture scene with Michael Madsen.

■ **VERDICT:** Tarantino's first, and perhaps his best work.

**STARSHIP TROOPERS 3 – MARAUDER**

■ **DIRECTOR:** Edward Neumeier
■ **STARRING:** Casper Van Dien



The destruction of the original is complete with this horrible sequel. Even Van Dien reprising his role as Johnny Rico and the uber-hotness of Jolene Blalock couldn't save this puppy.

■ **VERDICT:** Craptastic

**BATMAN BEGINS – GIFT SET**

■ **DIRECTOR:** Chris Nolan
■ **STARRING:** Christian Bale



This deluxe set includes an exclusive comic, 6 minutes of exclusive action in HD from The Dark Knight and a bunch of other goodies. Revisit one of the best comic adaptations around.

■ **VERDICT:** Perfect addition to any collection

**SIXTH SENSE**

■ **DIRECTOR:** M. Night Shyamalan
■ **STARRING:** Bruce Willis



Not since The Usual Suspects had there been a movie twist like this. Haley Joel Osment's performance belies his age, and is outstanding.

■ **VERDICT:** Dark, disturbing and brilliant



BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad

SURE THING, SHERLOCK

Comedy? Or Tragedy? Either way, this face-off will prove an interesting turn of events. It's now common knowledge

that Robert Downey Jr.'s teaming up with Guy Ritchie for one of two (that's right, two) *Sherlock Homes* flicks currently in the making. Downey Jr. might have to work just as hard to earn his bread for this role, competing with Sacha Baron Cohen (that's Mr. Borat to you) in the second version of *Sherlock* (Will Ferrell as Dr. Watson). Great news for the fans of the Doyle's stories, as long as Downey doesn't screw up *Ironman II*.

NOT QUITE HOLLYWOOD

To have a documentary as an opening film for the Melbourne Film Festival may sound a little pretentious. But how about if this particular documentary was about Aussie films? Yawn! Well what if the doco had the king of gore Quentin Tarantino in it? better! Now that the brave, proud patriots of Australia are at attention, we think that you'll be interested to know that Australia once had a reputation for producing the wildest, most violent, gory and most full-frontal nudity films around. Interested now?

MAX PAYNE

Good news for all those fans of Payne, a new movie is in the works. Being true to the plot of the game, the adaptation follows a New York cop who is framed for killing a few big-shots when he's really trying to find the murderers of his wife and child. Its not due out for a while yet, but we can happily say that it stars Mark Wahlberg.

LOST PLANET

Keeping with the trend of game-to-movie adaptations, Warner Bros has teamed up with the game's creator Capcom for the production of *Lost Planet*. It'll focus on mankind's need for new energy sources and an expedition to a 'lost planet' (conveniently covered in ice). The script is written by David Hayter (and if his name sounds familiar then it's probably because he's also known as the voice of Solid Snake in *Metal Gear Solid*).



CINEMA

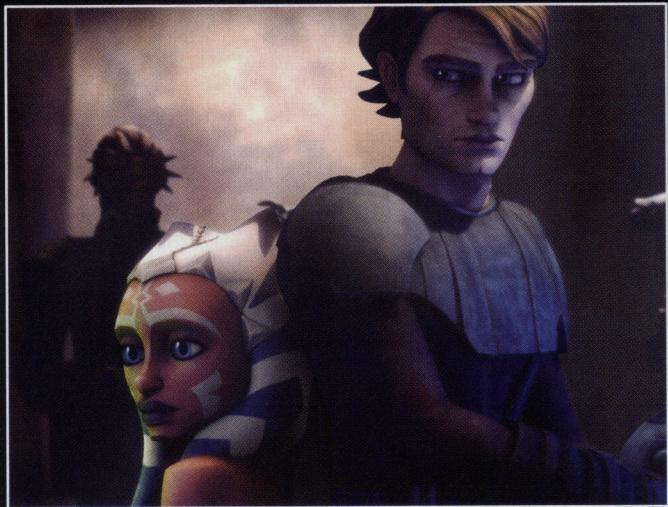
STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS (PG)

■ DIRECTOR: Henry Gilroy

■ STARRING: Ian Abercrombie, Dee Bradley Baker, Anthony Daniels

Though it may not be news for *Star Wars* fans, George Lucas has decided to add yet another *Star Wars* film to the saga (as if we could ever have enough!) With the name that had been used for a video game, a comic book, and a TV series, *The Clone Wars* serves as an introduction to the CGI TV series.

This instalment is set to take up where *Episodes II* and *III* left off, to a time when *The Clone Wars* raged between the Confederacy of Independent Systems and the Galactic Republic. Here Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan depart to find the kidnapped son of Jabba the Hutt. Count Dooku will undoubtedly unleash his minions and there will be more than one appearance by the much-loved Yoda.



COMING SOON

HELLBOY II: THE GOLDEN ARMY

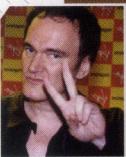
■ Starring: Ron Perlman
Taking on board the visionary (albeit slightly twisted) director of *Pan's Labyrinth*, the crew from *Hellboy* return to face a new army of mythical creatures from the underworld threatening humanity in an attempt to rule the world.

THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR

■ Starring: Brendan Fraser
In the wake of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, Brendan Fraser further perpetuates the myth of the adventurous archaeologist by picking up his spade and unearthing the shape-shifting first emperor of Qin (aka Jet Li).

THE HOUSE BUNNY

■ Starring: Anna Faris
Playboy bunny Shelly gets evicted from the Playboy mansion. What's a brainless, bodacious, sexually promiscuous girl to do? Move into a sorority. Luckily these girls will provide a few [forced] laughs and maybe even a few points with the missus.



MASSIVE BLU-RAY GIVEAWAY

Thanks to our good friends at Warner Home Video, OPS is delighted to offer you the chance to win an awesome line-up of the latest Blu-ray movies! There are fifteen must-see classics up on offer, and one lucky winner is going to take the lot!

WIN!

15 Amazing
Blu-ray movies
to be won!

Featuring the following
must-own titles!

- The Departed
- Blood Diamond
- Superman Returns
- The Shining
- The Last Samurai
- Syriana
- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- A Clockwork Orange
- Superman II:
The Richard Donner Cut
- The Cowboys
- The Dirty Dozen
- Out For Justice
- Under Siege
- Unforgiven
- The Fugitive



For your chance to win, all you have to do is log on to our website at www.gameplayer.com.au, click your way through to the competition and tell us in 25 words or less:

Which of the films is your favourite and why?

Terms and Conditions: 1. Offer expires on 17 September, 2008. 2. Prizes are not transferrable; the judges' decision is final. 3. No responsibility taken by the promoter for lost entries. For more terms and conditions, please refer to www.gameplayer.com.au.



TIPS & CHEATS

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

Hints, tips and tricks to make you a war machine! OF DOOM!

Pat Benatar once warbled that, "Love is a battlefield." Cleary Ms. Benatar has never been to an actual battlefield because - unless it's a really bad relationship - using sniper rifles and RPG's on your girlfriend is a general no-no.*

We at OPM have been in too many a FPS battlefield. More specifically the numerous combat zones in the highly enjoyable Battlefield: Bad Company. This FPS has a surprisingly large single player campaign, but ultimately - it's all about the multiplayer.

So, just because we're a little bit awesome, we're going to provide you with tips, hints and strategies that can turn you from a quivering grunt to a battle hardened death bringer... OF DOOM!

*Note, this is not a reference to the real General No-No of the Cessnock Reserves. Apologies.



THE GAME

At the time of printing there's one mode of multiplayer - Gold Rush. We should note here that a proposed second mode, Conquest, is on the way - but right now let's go golden.

The set-up is simple. There are attackers and defenders. The attackers want to plant charges on the defender's gold crates - blowing them up and unlocking more of the map so they can blow up more crates! The defenders want to stop them. Here are some general tips for attackers and defenders.

Attackers aka: "Yee-hah we gonna blow us up some GOLD!"

Pros

- You have one goal and one goal only: destroy your enemy's gold crates
- You don't have to plant a charge - you can use tanks or other means of high explosive to destroy the charges without having to get up close and personal with them

- You pretty much know where the defenders will be - within eye shot of the gold - whereas you can attack from anywhere at any time!

Cons

- Attackers do not have unlimited respawns. So the whole running, gunning, dying, resurrecting and running, gunning etc. technique will not work. Every attacker is important
- If you're battling against some tricky defenders they can lay traps, have snipers put in the tops of barns, houses and towers. There are some sniper rifles that can penetrate metal, so you're never really all that safe
- Defenders have unlimited respawns so they can keep coming back and defusing your charges, calling in artillery strikes on your tanks and sniping the crap out of you

Defenders aka: "Why would you blow up our gold? Just steal it! Pah!"



■ "woo hooo, over here!"



■ Where the frack is my platoon?



Pros

- Unlimited respawns. If you're around the same skill level as the attackers you can simply get in good shooting possies and blast away. However due to the fact that almost every standing structure can be reduced to a pile of bricks, one should not get too cocky
- Laying traps, hiding until the tanks start rolling in and then taking 'em from behind and laying charges near - but not too near - to gold crates so once the attacker crosses the threshold you detonate them with extreme explosiveness (it's a word!)
- You can wait for them to come to you, or send a squad out to thin their ranks. Remember they don't keep respawning

Cons

- When you get down to it all the attackers really have to do is blow up crates of gold you have to save the crates and kill all the attackers to win
- Defensive positions can get the crap bombed out of them due to the fact

they're stationary

- If the attackers get organised, with multiple tanks, boats and RPG toting soldiers chances are you'll not only lose that bit of territory but retreat in a disorganized shambles

General Advice

Work to your strengths. There are five classes of soldier: Assault, Demolition, Recon, Specialist and Support. Try each one out and see how you go. One of the best things about Bad Company's multiplayer is that when you die you can come back as a different class - plus choose to respawn with the squad or nearest base. Let's take a look at the classes:

Assault

This fellow is all about running and gunning. Now, if you keep your wits about you and use the L1 precise aim, you should chalk up some serious casualties, giving you points to spend on unlocking weapons and gadgets. OPM recommends



■ Mother Nature enlists new recruits in the war on deforestation!

you snatch up an M16 or similar gun with a high rate of accuracy and damage. Also, and this works especially well if you're on the attack, you can get an auto injector thingy, getting your health back up.

Demolition

Rather than use this class to make things explode, use him as a defensive chappy. He can lay mines, protect crate houses with his shotty, although a semi automatic shotgun is sooo much better. In all honesty not one of the better classes as his success depends on very specific circumstances, eg: will the tank roll over the mine on the road or just fang down the hill?

Recon

This is an easy call. Do you like to snipe? If you answered yes then this is the class for you. Admittedly more useful in defence, a good sniper can be the difference between victory and humiliating defeat. Note: Sniper man also has a motion sensor that can be hurled like a grenade. All soldiers within

its radius will appear on your radar. Now hunker down and get to sniping!

Specialist

Good for short range attacks and placing C4 charges on crates, vehicles and buildings. Mainly to create distractions. Keep him fast and well armed with explosives to achieve best results. The specialist is an odd fellow to master but once you get a handle on him he becomes indispensable.

Support

This class rules! It was such a surprise. After all, you start off with an alright gun, a drill that fixes busted vehicles and a whole bunch of med kits to heal your team mates. Booooring, right? Nay, wrong! Throw med kits like they're going out of style and each kit used by a friendly gets you mucho points. Also - you see an enemy tank and a friendly tank duking it out? Get behind the friendly and use your drill to keep it alive. The result? More points. Also, when you have the points

- unlock the gadget that brings artillery fire down on your selected target. Big fun!

Tidy Tips

- Want to open a window so you can snipe, use an RPG or just see where the enemy is? Don't waste your ammo - press triangle and a few slashes later: open window! Same applies for doors and some crates.
- If you've set charges in a gold crate room and the defenders look like they're about to mow you down - detonate straight away. Yes, you will die but that's one less crate you have to worry about.
- Respawn somewhere smart. Certainly your instinct is to get back with the squad but you're not helping anyone if you materialise in the middle of a bullet ballet.
- Thanks to the very destructible environments you can judiciously blow up a building so it looks deserted but really you're hiding amongst the rubble, ready to snipe, you sneaky pants, you!
- Vehicles are great at causing mucho damage and transporting troops. When in one of these press triangle and you'll switch seats. If you're the one in control make sure you angle the vehicle so that your fellow men can shoot.
- Create devastating attack formations. A good one is two tanks - filled with men - a jeep and a helicopter. Straight away your opposition will try to destroy your transportation. Bugger them - everyone out of the war machines and spread through the area like a virulent disease. Yes, some of you will die. Many even - but an organised assault can really throw a spanner in the works.
- Finally, remember this is team work! It's very impressive that you've killed a brace of hostiles with your gun and its grenade launcher by yourself. But if the other team has either destroyed all your gold or killed all your other men - that self satisfied smirk won't be on your face for long.

DATABASE

All the games that matter on PS3!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

DAMNATION

Release: Late 2008

Normally if you mention the words 'Civil War' and 'game' in the same sentence our narcolepsy will kick in. Ah, but shove it in an alternate 'steampunk' universe controlling a dude who makes Altair from *Assassin's Creed* look like a lazy bastard and you can label us excited.

MIRROR'S EDGE

Release: Late 2008

Take the Unreal Engine 3, give it a colourful boost and throw us into a first person environment where we are free to run, jump, tumble, shimmy and more and we'll be up for it. Which is good, as this one's set to give us our best workout ever – although virtually, natch.

ROCK BAND 2

Release: Late 2008

Alright, so Harmonix deserve a right good thumping for flogging what's essentially a patched *Rock Band* with the bugs and shite bits fixed at a premium, but they had us drooling forgivingly at the mere mention of the inclusion of the post-punk awesomeness that is Elvis Costello's 'Pump it Up'.

SPLATTERHOUSE

Release: 2009

You want blood, guts, and chainsaw-wielding mayhem? You don't? Well this won't be for you, and we don't like you. But those who remember this classic arcade game from back in the day will be chomping at the bit to get the terror mask on and start choppin' and a loppin' as it goes net-gen in all its blood-bathed gory - erm, glory... we guess.

PS3 TOP 20



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Arguably the best PS3 game to date – an undisputed masterpiece. A legendary game with a legendary hero.

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

The scope and scale of GTAV is beyond anything gaming has ever had to offer. No game has come close to creating a world anything like Liberty City.

ASSASSIN'S CREED

A landmark in gaming history. Nothing short of awe-inspiring. The missions are samey, but navigating open-worlds will never be the same. The biggest leap since GTAI.

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

The best PlayStation exclusive on the market and the best looking console game to date. Frankly, *Uncharted* rocks up to the party and just plain owns everything...

CALL OF DUTY 4

Relentlessly exciting. Includes a dizzying variety of combat scenarios and stacks of bleeding-edge military hardware. You'd have to be insane, or a girly-man, to miss it.

ROCK BAND

The best party game ever and a triumph in every department, with a killer set list and rad instruments. You wanted the best; you got the best – *Rock Band* rocks.

MOTORSTORM

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3. Not even the lack of split-screen can detract from this fantastic racer.

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made. The massive 40-player online deathmatches are more fun than you can imagine.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put – awesome. This is arguably the only RPG you'll need for some time to come.

SKATE

A groundbreaking title that resets the bar for sports games in general. It kickflips *Tony Hawk's* to the curb with its simple approach. Irresistibly addictive and downright essential.



WARHAWK

There is no better multiplayer game on PS3 right now. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, it's a superior piece of software.

BURNOUT PARADISE

Despite the lack of the old Crash Mode, the overwhelming majority of *Burnout Paradise* rocks harder than Slash during an epic guitar solo. So fast, so wild.

HEAVENLY SWORD

Heavenly Sword is one of the best games we've seen in ages. A beautiful, yet deep, masterpiece and an awesomely enjoyable ride, albeit a rather short one.

GUITAR HERO III

Captures everything perfect about *Guitar Hero* with the best tracklist yet, but very nearly spoilt it all with the ridiculous new Battle Mode.

COLIN McRAE DIRT

Colin McRae DIRT is an ambitious, accessible racer with a surprising amount of depth. The best rally sim ever? You better believe it. Rest in peace big guy.

THE DARKNESS

Tentacles and guns – the perfect combination. Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.

STUNTMAN: IGNITION

The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour-long orgasm. Gentlemen, start your boners. *Stuntman: Ignition* succeeds in upending the original in every way.

RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

The biggest, wildest, most interesting, varied and downright good ol' fashioned fun adventure these two have been part of.

THE ORANGE BOX

A stellar package; ripe, in season and packed full of vitamin value. If there isn't one title here that does it for you your gaming license is null and void.

RACE DRIVER: GRID

No V8s and no Australian tracks and it still rates up there with the best of 'em for the suped up cars, intensity and speeeeeee! A very pretty package!

PS3

ARMORED CORE 4

7

A far better alternative to *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

BEOWULF

6

Has the dubious honour of ticking every game cliché.

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

6

A solid mix of genres wrapped in an intriguing tale.

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII

6

Not quite the ace of aces at this stage.

CALL OF DUTY 3

7

A solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

6

Sick and twisted but not enough variety.

THE CLUB

8

Compulsive and fun – one club you should join.

CONAN

7

A bulldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

7

A worthy entry into the series but the backtracking spoils it.

DEF JAM: ICON

8

Somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun.

THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT

5

Impressive tech, but it's still a \$160 card game.

F.E.A.R.

8

A chilling ride but the graphics are a bit of a shocker.

FIFA 08

8

Finally puts *FIFA* on level terms with *Pro Evolution*.

FIFA STREET 3

7

The saviour for your multiplayer soul. Simple but fun.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

8

Boasts visuals that will knock the teeth out of you.

FOLKLORE

8

Great graphics, memorable characters. A sweet surprise.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

7

Brims with potential but fails to live up to it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

5

Plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION

6

Fine, but do yourself a favour and get the PS2 version.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

4

Uninspired level design and dull quests make this a chore.

HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

6

Decent, but its chore-like structure will bore most.

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

7

A top bit of racing fluff, although it's all a tad generic.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

6

One part *Hitman*, one part Michael Mann; mostly a let down.

LAIR

5

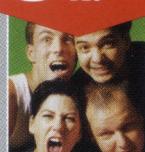
A massive let-down. It feels rushed and unfinished.

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

6

Solid enough, but a lazy port and a visual let-down.

5 ESSENTIAL ROCK BAND DLC



MADDEN NFL 08

7

Some great improvements and plenty of modes.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

9

Great co-op and an exhaustive list of Marvel's greatest.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE

6

A dinosaur of an FPS – wait for *Brothers in Arms* instead.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

3

A rubber godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

6

Feels like a PS2 port, looks like a PS2 port. Disappointing.

NBA 08

5

Fails to pick a side (sim or arcade) and so fails at both.

NBA 2K8

8

Not as pretty as *LIVE* but has more depth.

NBA LIVE 08

8

Best of its kind. B-ball devotees will adore it, guaranteed.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

8

The brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

8

The last *NFS* street racer before the series went legit.

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

8

Great smoke, but more depth would've been nice.

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

8

A treasure trove of gaming goodness, super tough.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END

6

A very shallow slash 'em up. Ye be warned.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

8

Still the best soccer in the biz, but the graphics are dire.

SEGA SUPERSTAR TENNIS

5

Enough with Sonic trying to best Mario.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

4

Mostly terrible. Avoid at all costs.

STRANGLEHOLD

7

Max Payne inspired action, plenty of frantic fun.

TIME CRISIS 4

7

Bi-polar, so stick to the arcade mode.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: AW2

8

A tense, realistic shooter, but *Rainbow Six Vegas* is better.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

6

Struggles to escape the shadow of *SKATE*.

TUROK

7

Packs plenty of bite but it's missing a few teeth.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

8

Gorgeous and gory, but the lack of split-screen blows.

UEFA EURO 2008

8

A possible contender for football game of the year.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

8

Some of the best fun four people can have on one PS3.

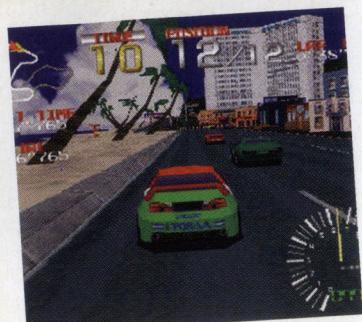
WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

7

A solid entry. A few new additions but still plays the same.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Ridge Racer

THE CONSOLE: PSOne

THE YEAR: 1995

THE MOMENT: Back in the '90s, our flatmates simply LOVED us. Especially after we managed a sneak extended play of *Ridge Racer* on a massive rear-projection teev (hey, they were the thing back then!) that had us spewing endless positive adjectives/grunts for months until the PSOne finally went on sale locally. For, of course, store day zero saw the investment of exorbitant amounts of dough on said console and the only game to have at the time, the interactive car porn of doom that was *Ridge Racer*.

For years, gamers had put up with pale imitations of coin-gobbling games on home systems masquerading as 'arcade conversions'. They may have looked ever-so vaguely reminiscent, they may have played ever-so vaguely reminiscent, but we were kidding ourselves in thinking they were a substitute for the real thing. Then, Namco's arcade super-smash turned PSOne launch title changed everything. Here was an arcade conversion that looked like the real thing, that played like the real thing – and it was a watershed moment in gaming for us and everybody. Never before had there been such a leap in home gaming ability – and really, nothing has been as jaw-droppingly, face-slappingly stunning in a technological sense since.

Drifting was the word, and more hours than we care to recollect spent honing each and every powerslide to within a bee's proboscis of a cliff face was time well spent in our flatdom. Alright, so there was no two-player mode, but you alternated, sitting back and enjoying the ride as you eagerly awaited your next turn to burn. Especially once the awesome 'devil car' was unlocked.

Sure, as far as racers go it's pretty pallid nowadays, but this four-wheeled baby battered down barriers we couldn't even imagine at the time, and that was BIG.

Taking a look back at the best in the business...

RETROSPECTIVE

WIPEOUT 2097

Shoom! Shooooom! Shoooooooooooooom!

Way back when the PSOne wiped all things console-like that came before off the face of the planet, there was a racing game called *Wipeout*. Set in environments given a lick of funky by the long-trendy Designers Republic, you piloted pointy spaceships at astounding speeds around increasingly added 'futuristic' tracks, basically employing any dirty tricks at your disposal to blow all of your rivals into the next century. With its precise, yet intuitive, level of control over your craft, *Wipeout* was never simply 'just' a racing game; it was a benchmark that all ensuing racers had to aspire to.

So when it came to the inevitable sequel, developers Psygnosis could have been forgiven for thinking: "Hey! If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" However with *Wipeout 2097* they managed to come up with something even better on every level. We were treated to eight brand new, and increasingly difficult, tracks to hoon around, five perfectly pointy racers to choose from in order to perform said hooning, and a racing game which, regardless of any will power you may have possessed, kept you up until ridiculously early hours of the morning desperately trying to outrace the evil console-controlled opposition.

The key to *Wipeout 2097* was that, rather than indiscriminately farting

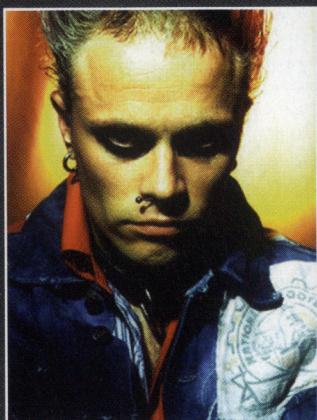
around with the elements that made the game so amazing in the first place, the programmers instead carefully tweaked everything to the nth degree, making things markedly tighter all round, as well as incorporating many genuine improvements over the original. Gone were the arduous loading times, as well as the reloading between every race. Added were extra competitors, more varieties of power-up (including the awesome 'Quake Disruptor', which turned the track in front of you into a giant wave, flinging your opponents skywards), a button to discard crappy weapons, a vastly streamlined options system, track diversions (read 'pit lanes') that allowed you to recharge your shields without losing time, and a heck of a lot more besides, even including secret modes that turned the whole thing into an out-and-out shooter! Plus, it was all wrapped up in graphics that made the first game look pallid by comparison. Finally, in a move that was rare at the time, there was also shedloads of product placement for a certain beverage that could be puzzled out as 'Crimson Crap.' Sometimes being a pioneer isn't such a great thing.

Wipeout 2097 was the pinnacle of home-based racing in 1997, and as necessary as oxygen for any dedicated racer – it really was that good. As testament to its quality, even the *Wipeouts* on PSP have scarcely messed with the formula. Needless to say we're stockpiling a multitude of caffeinated products in readiness for some *Wipeout HD* action on the PS3...

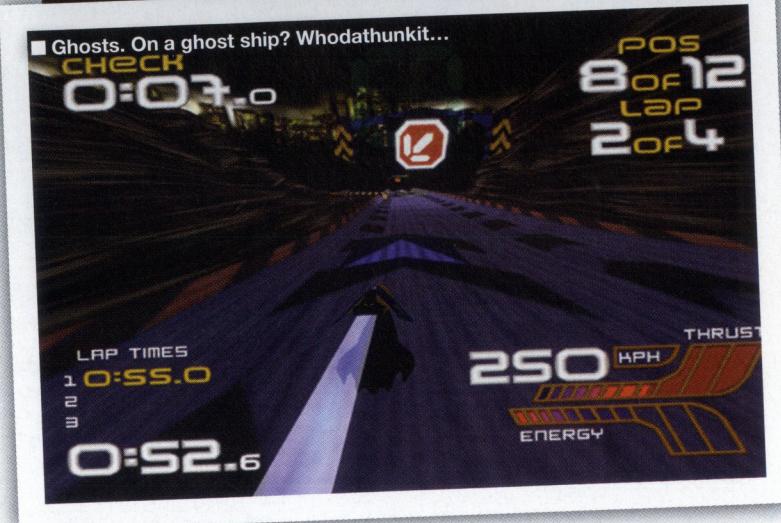
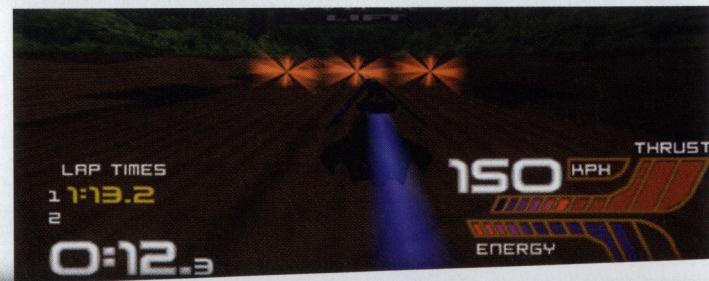
– Amy Flower

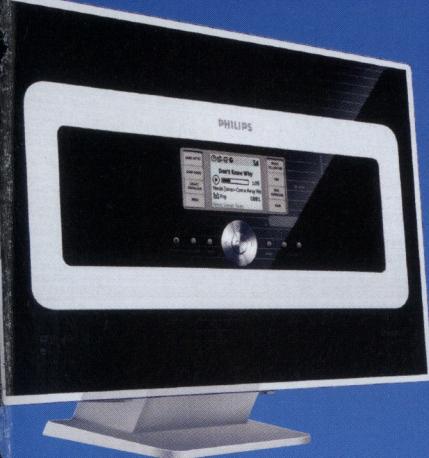


IT JUST AIN'T ENOOF IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT DOOF



After the initial *Wipeout*'s rather nondescript in-house tunes – sorry, 'choons', to adopt correct '90s parlance – a 'bangin'' licensed soundtrack graced *Wipeout 2097*. The hottest techno DOOFmeisters of the day got the pointy-pointy treatment, with the likes of the *Chemical Brothers*, *Future Sound of London*, *Underworld*, *Fluke*, *Photek* and *The Prodigy* stumping up their works. Kicking arse as it did, racing to the latter's 'Firestarter' had to be experienced to be believed, even without Keith yabbering on about instigating, illustrating, infatuating and intoxicating, as it was – appropriately – an instrumental mix in the game.





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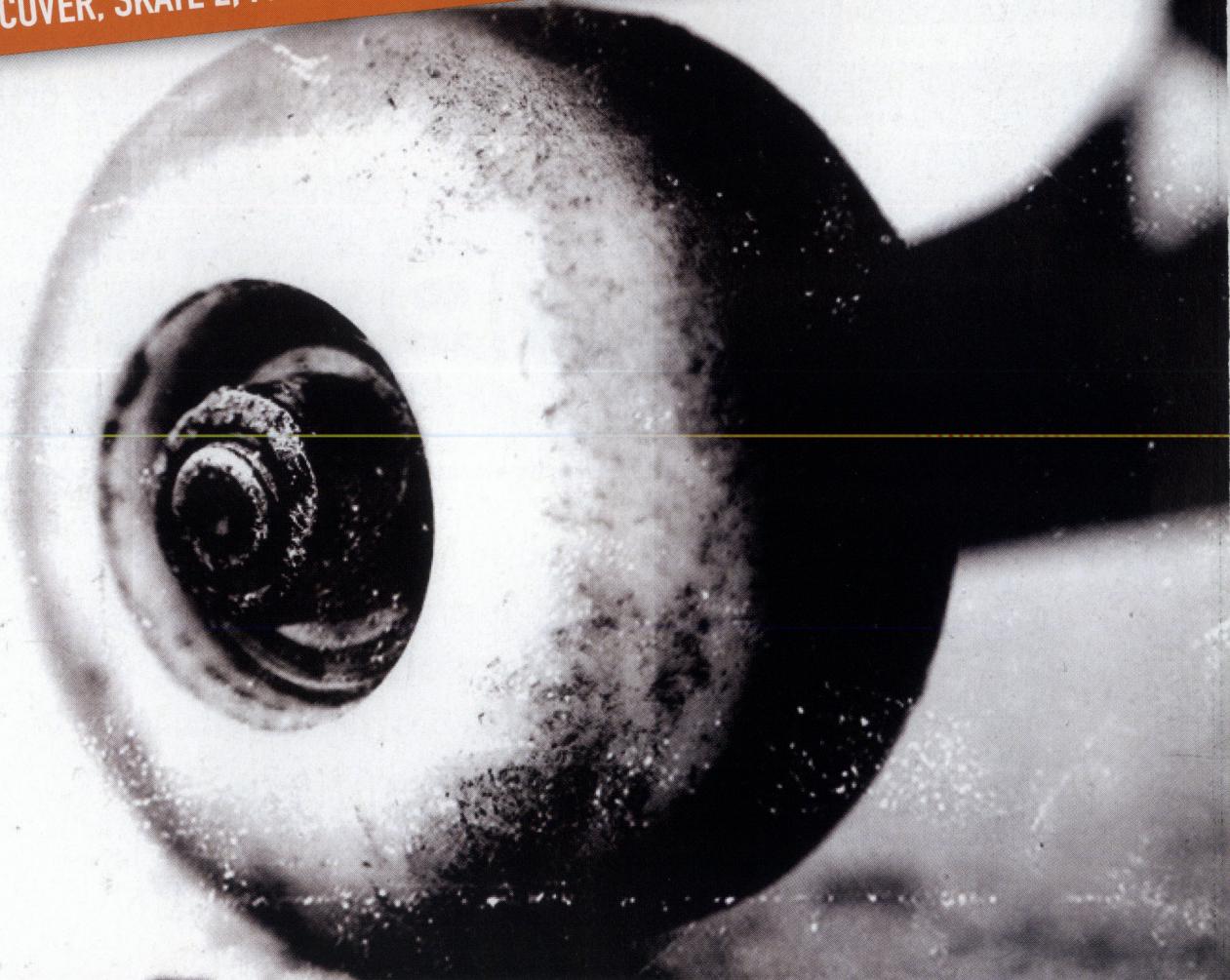
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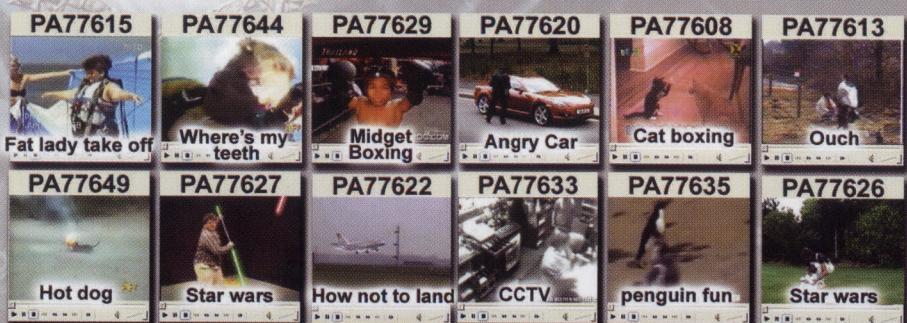
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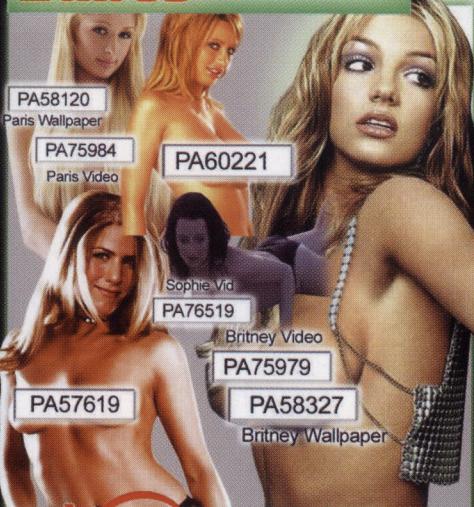
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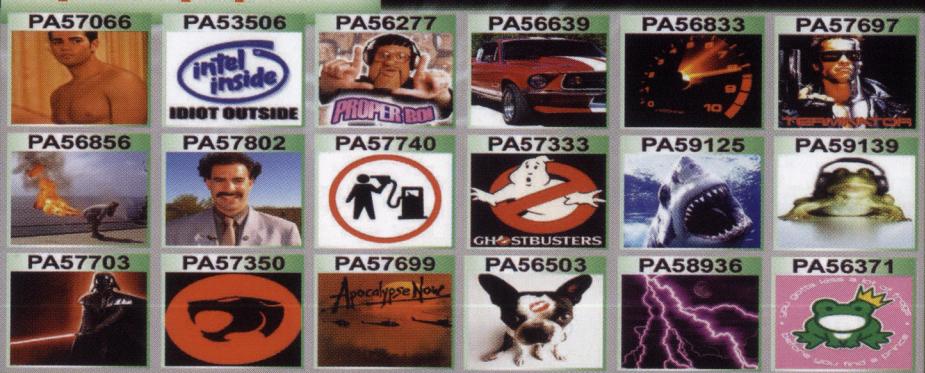
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PA43334 PA 46019 Arctic Monkeys - Brainstorm
PA43420 PA 46948 Arctic Monkeys - Fluorescent Adole...
PA44277 PA 47163 Arctic Monkeys - Teddy Picker
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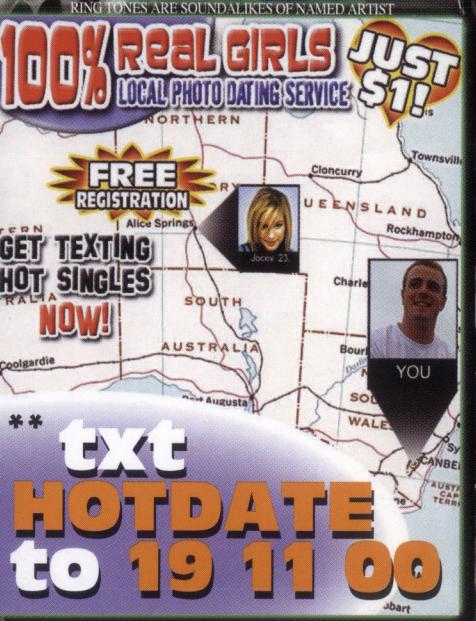
ROCKTONES

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PA44591 PA 47268 Madonna ft. J. Timberlake - 4 Minutes
PA44697 --- Gabriella Cilmi - Sweet About Me
PA44215 PA 47234 Flo Rida feat T Pain - Low
PA44699 --- Psycho Teddy - Psycho Teddy
PA43608 PA 47012 Newton Faulkner - Dream Catch Me
PA44616 PA 47261 Estelle feat Kanye West - American Boy
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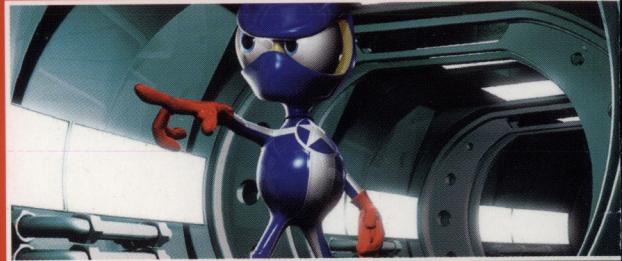
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